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# **The Role of the Project Sponsor and their Impact on IT Project Success**

A Thesis presented to the  
Department of Information Systems



By

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Master of Commerce (Information Systems) 2012 (INF5004W)

## Abstract

The role of the project sponsor has been identified as being fundamental in establishing and delivering projects. While it is evident that an effective sponsor means active, hands-on management of the project, including acting as the project's champion in showing a passion for the project and removing barriers to success, the specific roles of the sponsor that facilitate project success have been unclear.

**Objectives:** The primary purpose of this research is to identify the roles of the project sponsor that impacts information technology (IT) project success. Recent emphasis has been placed on the importance of top management support, more specifically, on the individual that typically provides the direction and funding, the project sponsor. Furthermore, although most project management bodies of knowledge recognise the importance of the role of project sponsor in achieving project success, and while it is evident that recognition of the significance of the project sponsor role in the research literature is increasing in both the project management and general literature, sparse research exists specifying exactly what behaviours constitute the role of an effective sponsor in ultimately delivering a successful project

**Methodology:** This research project began with a review of the literature on project success, the dimensions of project success, the project team and the project sponsor. Thematic analysis was conducted on a selected sample of project managers and project sponsors. Semi structured interviews were used to obtain data. Quantitative demographic data was used to further support this research.

**Results:** This study has identified a number of themes or roles that have been recognised as having an impact on the success of a project. The most common role identified was that of an actively involved sponsor. Other roles identified as having an impact on successful project delivery included being cognizant of organisational politics and applying political pressure, demonstrating project value to senior management, empowering and partnering with the project manager, ensuring the availability of resources, timely resolution of escalated issues and the appropriate level of authority and influence within the organisation.

**Findings:** The findings of this study are in line with literature which reflects an awareness of the critical role played by the project sponsor. Using thematic analysis, themes or roles were identified as sponsor roles which are crucial to project success.

**Conclusion:** Project sponsorship is a critical component in the successful delivery of a project, and the continuous active involvement from the sponsor throughout the project will have a significant impact on the projects performance and success.

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# 1. Introduction and Problem Description

## 1.1. Background

Organisations constantly need to change and transform the way they do business in order to survive within their respective industries. The need for survival of organisations places high demands on business executives to adapt to these changes and ultimately lead the organisation successfully into the future. Besides the normal day-to-day operations of the business, organisations also invest in projects, and these projects play a critical role in the development and continued existence of organisations (Bourne & Walker, 2007; Hass, 2005).

One reason why projects are so vital is the fast pace of change, another is the more specialised nature of modern business (Hass, 2005; Karlsen, Andersen, Birkely & Odegard, 2005). A number of projects typically involve information technology (IT) and represent distinctive types of projects. IT is clearly valued in all business environments, as evidenced by both public- and private-sector organisations investing in IT projects at an ever-increasing rate (Hartman & Ashrafi, 2002; Rosacker & Olsom, 2008).

IT projects involve the provision of a service to implement systems and solutions, which include various hardware and software products (Howard, 2001; Zwikaël, 2008). Projects executed within the IT environment are characterised by high risk, rapid changes, a high need for interpersonal skills and large number of request changes during the project life cycle, which often results in most projects not being completed according to the required specifications, within the specified budget or the agreed time schedule (Gillard, 2004; Zwikaël, 2008).

Shenhar & Dvir (2007, p. 75) define a *project* as a “temporary organisation and process set up to achieve a specified goal under the constraints of time, budget, and other resources”, and *project management* “as the managerial activities needed to lead a project to a successful end.” A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) (Project Management Institute, 2008, p. 3) defines project management as “the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activates in order to meet or exceed stakeholder needs and expectations from a project.” Essentially, the project undertaking is temporary and intends to produce a unique product (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007; Tesch, Kloppenborg & Frolick, 2007).



In many organisations the concept of formal project management is a vital component of the organisational structure and its use is built into the organisation's business processes (Srivannaboon, 2006). Organisations have recognised the importance of effective project management in positively influencing project outcomes and, consequently, the effectiveness of organisations (Kloppenborg, Stubblebine & Tesch, 2007).

As a formal managerial discipline, project management is still relatively young (Bourne, 2007). With time, tools, techniques, and methods became standardised across industries, and businesses, and increasingly organisations began witnessing the benefits of organising work around projects (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007; Tesch, *et al.*, 2007).

Project management is a specialised type of management, similar to other functional strategies, that is used to accomplish a series of business objectives, strategies, and work tasks within well-defined schedule and budget constraints (Srivannaboon, 2006). Schwalbe (2004) defines project management within the IT field as the application of formal and informal knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to develop a system that provides a desired level of functionality on time and within budget.

Previous research has established a positive relationship between formal project management practices and project performance (Martin, Pearson & Furumo, 2007). According to Bourne (2007) and Tesch *et al.* (2007), effective project management is critical to the success of any software development project. In fact, the management aspects of a project are typically more vital to its success than the technical aspects (Bourne, 2007).

Successful projects provide value to organisations; project management practices provide organisations with a strategic and valuable asset (Besner & Hobbs, 2006, Dalcher & Benediktsson, 2006). Value is created when good project management practices and good measurement tools improve project success (Besner & Hobbs, 2006; Martin *et al.*, 2007). The resources allocated to most projects are finite and thus entail a balancing act between the triple constraints of budget, schedule, and scope (Dalcher & Benediktsson, 2006; Hartman & Ashrafi, 2002).

While there are many who contribute to a given project, the research literature indicates that project managers are often considered the direct leadership component essential to project success (Brewer, 2005; Hartman & Ashrafi, 2002).

As organisations become more project-centric and the current number of IT projects grows rapidly, project managers are expected to manage broadly varying projects and teams, consisting of a number of team members from various levels within the organisation, to ultimately deliver a successful project (Brewer, 2005; Crawford & Brett, 2001).

However, recent research has placed an emphasis on investigating the role of executive sponsors in the project management process and project success (Helm & Remington, 2005; Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2007; Tesch, Kloppenborg & Dietz, 2006).

The sponsor —the individual or group who "owns" a project and is considered responsible for ensuring its success—is typically the one who proposes a project and whose business unit will reap the benefits of a successfully completed project (Perkins, 2005; Jarvenpaa & Ives; 1991; Tesch *et al.*, 2006). The sponsor is also typically the individual responsible for allocating project resources (Bryde, 2008; Crawford & Brett, 2001; Kloppenborg, Manolis & Tesch, 2011; Jedd, 2005).

According to Jedd (2005) and Perkins (2005) the effectiveness of the sponsor is frequently a predictor of project success, as evidenced by Esteves and Pastor (2002) and Sumner (1999) who have gone on to identify the project sponsor role as a critical success factor . Involved and committed sponsors must have enough influence to make the changes that are deemed necessary to successfully complete a project (Besner & Hobbs, 2006; Perkins, 2005; Tesch *et al.*, 2006). However, despite this, many organisations do not spend adequate time training sponsors and explaining their expected role and responsibilities in the project and towards project management (Bryde, 2008; Bucero, 2008; Crawford & Brett, 2001).

## 1.2. Purpose of the Research

The primary purpose of this research is to identify the roles of the project sponsor that impacts IT project success. According to Crawford, Cooke-Davies, Hobbs, Labuschagne & Remington (2008), various factors have combined to draw attention to the importance of sponsorship of projects. One such factor being that after many years of attempting to increase the success rates of projects by concentrating on the "project-based management and the project management competence of practitioners" (Crawford *et al.*, 2008, p. 43), compelling evidence reveals that the success or failure of projects is not completely within the charges of the project manager and project team (Crawford *et al.*, 2008, Turner & Müller, 2004).

Recent emphasis has been placed on the importance of top management support, more specifically, on the individual that typically provides the direction and funding, the project sponsor (Crawford *et al.*, 2008; Crawford & Brett, 2001; Tesch *et al.*, 2006; Zwikael, 2008). Additionally, increased focus on corporate governance, resulting from the numerous big-profile corporate collapses, which has highlighted the need for accountability, transparency, and ability to implement strategy, has furthermore drawn attention to the sponsorship role (Crawford *et al.*, 2008).

Efficiently delivering expected benefits from information technology (IT) projects remains a challenge for many organisations (Gemino, Reich, & Sauer, 2007; Lyytinen & Robey, 1999, Sumner, Bock & Giamartino, 2006). Industry studies and government reports continue to call for improved performance in IT projects (Gemino *et al.*, 2007, Sumner *et al.*, 2006). The combination of increasing reliance on IT and the increasing costs of delivering such projects suggests that IT project performance is a critical organisational issue (Gemino *et al.*, 2007; Martin *et al.*, 2007). As noted by Sumner *et al.* (2006), while technological issues may lead to failure, it is also the case that large-scale IT project failures frequently occur due to management issues “surrounding the implementation” (Scott and Vessey, 2002, p. 80).

Project performance is typically defined in terms of three outcome factors: cost, duration and quality (Dalcher & Benediktsson, 2006; Gemino *et al.*, 2007). According to Dalcher & Benediktsson (2006) and Martin *et al.* (2007), while some researchers have suggested that project performance measurement should also include project team satisfaction, stakeholder satisfaction with the project team and the added business value of the IT project, it is generally accepted that the "triple constraint" outcomes of budget, schedule and quality form the foundation in terms of measuring project success.

Despite the long history of projects, and the existence of the project management discipline, project performance is still low (Glass, 2006; Shenhar & Dvir, 2007). Study after study has shown that most IT related projects are not completed on time, are over budget, and even when completed, many do not meet management or user expectations (Bryde, 2005; Raz, Shenhar, & Dvir, 2002; Shenhar & Dvir, 2007).

IT project success rates have been reported by the Standish Group every second year since 1994 and are known as the “Chaos Report” (Johnson, Karen, Boucher &

Robinson, 2001). Data from this survey has shown that 18 per cent of projects executed are cancelled without achieving any product, while 53 per cent end up with cost and schedule overruns, highlighting the poor performance of many IT projects (Zwikael, 2008).

Numerous project management research has considered the relationship between particular project characteristics, project management practices and project performance (Aladwani, 2002; Deephouse, Mukhopadhyay, Goldenson, Kellner, 1995; Martin *et al.*, 2007). Other studies have revealed the existence of a positive relationship between project size and complexity and certain project management practices and their combined effect on project performance (Martin *et al.*, 2007; Yetton, Martin, Sharma, Johnston, 2000).

Considerable research (Aladwani, 2002; Bryde, 2008; Bucero, 2008; Crawford *et al.*, 2008; Dalcher & Benediktsson, 2006; Deephouse *et al.*, 1995; Gemino *et al.*, 2007; Martin *et al.*, 2007) has been conducted exploring the relationships between IT projects, project characteristics and project management practices. However, appreciably absent from the growing body of literature on the management of projects within organisations is a focus on the structures and stakeholders actively affecting the project, in particular the role of the project sponsor.

Furthermore, although most project management bodies of knowledge recognise the importance of the role of project sponsor in achieving project success, and while it is evident that recognition of the significance of the project sponsor role in the research literature is increasing in both the project management and general literature, very little research exists specifying exactly what behaviours constitute the role of an effective sponsor in ultimately delivering a successful project (Crawford *et al.*, 2008; Helm & Remington, 2005; Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2011; Kloppenborg, Tesch, Manolis, & Heitkamp, 2006; Tesch *et al.*, 2006).

### 1.3. Objective of the research

As previously highlighted, although most project management literature recognises the project sponsor as a key stakeholder in most projects, very little research has examined the role of the executive sponsor in achieving project success. To this extent, the objective of this research is as follows:

- To identify the roles of the project sponsor that contributes towards project success.

#### **1.4. Value of the research**

The results of this study can have immediate implications for organisations involved in delivering successful IT projects by providing knowledge with regards to the role of a key stakeholder - namely the project sponsor - involved in project delivery.

Project sponsors play a vital role in project governance and project success and contribute to both project effectiveness and efficiency by driving project efficiencies at the project level (Cooke-Davies, 2005; Crawford & Brett, 2001). As such, effectively defining the role of the sponsor on IT projects lends itself toward improving project performance and delivery, and ultimately success.

This research can contribute to the body of Information Technology literature on project management by providing meaningful insights into the importance of the role of the project sponsor in contributing toward successful project outcomes. In addition, this research will contribute toward the limited literature available on this topic.

#### **1.5. Outline of the dissertation**

The dissertation has been broken down into sections and subsections. Section 2 provides a summary of the literature and ends with a brief description of the proposed research model. Section 3 provides a comprehensive overview of the problem statement and outlines the research question and objectives. Section 4 discusses the purpose and underlying research philosophy. Section 5 provides an overview of the research methodology, including the sampling plan and research instrument. The rest of the section covers the data collection method, research instrument design, data analysis technique, limitations and ethical issues. The results of the data analysis are provided in Section 6, followed by Section 7 which discusses the findings. The remainder of the dissertation covers the conclusion and expected contribution.

## 2. Literature Review

This literature survey examines the current literature in the areas of project success and the project sponsor role. The numerous definitions on the topic of project success are first discussed, followed by the varying dimensions of project success. This is followed by description of project stakeholders and project team whose interest may be positively or negatively affected by the execution, completion, or cancellation of the project. The existing literature on the role of the project sponsor is then reviewed along with the project sponsor and project manager relationship. The sponsor role and its influence on project success are then put forward. Finally, a summary of the literature reviewed is provided.

### 2.1. Project Success

#### 2.1.1. Defining Project Success

Project success has been widely discussed in the project management literature. The focus of most studies on project success is on dimensions of project success (i.e. how to measure it) and factors influencing project success (Huang & Wang, 2006).

Views on project success have shifted over the years from definitions that were limited to the implementation phase of the project lifecycle to definitions that reflect an appreciation of success across the entire project and product lifecycle (Jugdev & Müller, 2005). Determining how success is to be defined for a project is a necessary antecedent to the establishment of the appropriate methods for the selection of suitable measurement techniques (Bryde, 2005; Jugdev & Müller, 2005).

There are few topics in the field of project management that are so regularly and yet so rarely agreed upon as project success (Shenhar, Teshler, Dvir, Lipovetsky & Lechler, 2002). According to Baccarani (1999) and Karlsen *et al.* (2005), a review of the project management literature provides no consistent definition of the term “project success”.

Early mechanistic definitions of project management defined project success in terms of how well they met their scope, time and cost objectives – traditionally

known as the “iron triangle” (Atkinson, 1999; De Wit, 1988; Jugdev & Müller, 2005; Karlsen *et al.*, 2005).

Most project managers view their task as successfully completed when they finish the project on time, within budget, and according to specifications (Bourne, 2007). It should, nevertheless, be noted that since different stakeholders (the sponsor, developers, users etc.) will have different expectations of project, their criteria of project success will also differ (Karlsen *et al.*, 2005).

Jugdev & Müller (2005) state that if project success was only viewed in terms of the variables of scope, time and cost, then project management would be perceived as providing tactical (i.e. operational) value, and not strategic value. Recent definitions of project success are more inclusive and emphasize the value of working with stakeholders to define objectives, needs and expectations (De Wit, 1988; Jugdev & Müller, 2005).

Pinto and Mantel (1990) attempt to define project success according to three different dimensions:

- The efficiency of the implementation process that is “an internally oriented measure of the performance of the project team, including such criteria as staying on schedule, on budget, meeting the technical goals of the project, and maintaining smooth working relationship within the team and parent organisation.”
- The perceived quality of the project, which includes the project team’s perception of the value and usefulness of the project deliverables.
- The client’s satisfaction or an external performance measure of the project performance and its team.

Baccarani (1999) and Cooke-Davies (2002) have adopted the Logical Framework Methodology and observed the need to differentiate between two different concepts of project success.

*Project Management Success* – Focusing on the project process and has three criteria:

- Meeting time cost and quality objectives;
- Quality of the project management process; and
- Satisfying the project stakeholders' needs where they relate to the project management process.

*Product Success* – this deals with the effects of the project's final product and has three criteria:

- Meeting the project owner's strategic organisational objectives;
- Satisfaction of users' needs; and
- Satisfaction of the project stakeholders' needs where they relate to the product.

Baccarani (1999) maintains that in order to properly define and assess project success, a distinction should be made between project management success and product success, as they are not the same. For example, a project may be seen as successful, having met budget, schedule and cost constraints, but nevertheless failed to meet customer needs and expectations (Baccarani, 1999; Shenhar *et al.*, 2002).

From the review of the literature, it is apparent that there are various criteria and measures for determining success and that project success means different things to different people. The definition of project success that will be used throughout this paper is the one provided by the Project Management Institute (2008) which defines project success as including the 'iron triangle' aspects as well as the key stakeholders' satisfaction of the project.

### **2.1.2. Dimensions of Project Success**

Defining success is an important step in understanding the key success factors i.e. the inputs to the project management process that have influence on the outcome (Bryde, 2005; Cooke-Davies, 2002). The wide occurrence of projects in organisations makes the search for factors that influence project success a key



aspect to both researchers and practitioners (Shenhar *et al.*, 2002). Bryde (2008) and Cooke-Davies (2002) distinguish between two issues associated with project success: the criteria used to define and measure success, project success *criteria* and the factors that influence success project success *factors*. This section will focus on the topic of project success criteria and briefly touch on success factors.

Traditional success criteria focused on the variables of scope, cost, time and quality, and although there is general recognition that these factors are limited in predicting success, they are still the most commonly cited measures of success (Atkinson, 1999; Bryde, 2008). From the late 1980's onwards, attention was paid to identifying and exploring criteria from the perspective of project success being a 'multi-dimensional strategic concept' (Bryde, 2008).

Dvir *et al.* (2003) used multi-dimensional success criteria to measure the success of a project from four different angles, and found that the initiation phase, in which decisions such as deciding project objectives are made – primarily those made by the project sponsor – has the most influence on project success. In investigating success criteria on projects, Turner (2004) identified four necessary conditions for project success, namely: (1) Success criteria agreed with stakeholders, (2) Collaborative working relationship between project manager and team members, (3) Project manager should be empowered and (4) Project Owner/Sponsor should take influence in project performance.

In their study of factors affecting knowledge transfer on IT projects, Karlsen & Gottschalk (2004) identified five different criteria of IT project success:

**Project Performance.** This is the traditional evaluation criterion for project success, consisting of time, cost and quality. The project should be completed within the scheduled time, and the financial budget, while fulfilling the technical requirements.

**Project Outcome.** This measurement is concerned with assessing the developed system itself. Important dimensions include system maintainability, reliability, validity and information quality use.

**System Implementation.** This criterion is concerned with successfully introducing, installing, training, using, and modifying the system.

**Benefits for the Client Organisation.** Important facets of this success criterion are the improved efficiency and effectiveness, increased profits, achieving strategic goals, and organisational learning.

**Benefits for the Stakeholders.** Important dimensions of this success criterion are satisfied users, social and environmental impact, and personal development.

The concept of project success factors is based on the notion that there are a number of factors common to most projects (Bryde, 2008). Early research of project success factors, from the late 1980s to the early 1990s emphasizes the role of sponsor related activities in project success (Bryde, 2008). Pinto & Prescott (1988), in their research examining the attitudes of project managers and project team members found that top management support, in the form of willingness to provide the required resources and the authority/power for project success was one of 10 success factors.

Hartman & Ashrafi (2002), in their investigation on what practices are important to IT industries to successfully accomplish projects, identified 10 critical factors required in order to increase the chances of project success, which further highlights the importance of the project sponsor:

**Table 1:** Hartman and Ashrafi (2002), Top 10 Critical Success Factors

Rank Order	Critical Success Factor
1	Owner/sponsor is informed of the project status and his/her approval is obtained at each stage
2	Owner/sponsor is consulted at all stages of development and implementation
3	Proper communication channels are established at appropriate levels in the project team
4	The project has a clearly defined mission
5	Top management is willing to provide the necessary resources
6	The project achieves its stated business purpose

7	A detailed project plan with a detailed budget in place
8	The appropriate technology and expertise are available
9	Project changes are managed through a formal process
10	The project is completed with minimal and mutually agreed scope changes

Although these studies have identified some significant and consistent results, the factors only partially explain project success (Besner & Hobbs, 2006). As is evident, much research has been conducted in order to examine project success factors and the research has shown that the question of what constitutes success is complex and multifaceted (Besner & Hobbs, 2006; Bryde, 2005; Rozenes, Vitner & Spragget, 2006).

Furthermore, most of the factors contributing to success are related to management, organisational and human issues – not technical issues. Moreover, all the studies reviewed above highlight an association between sponsorship activity of top management support and project success. This is further supported by Young (2005) who in his investigation of five project case studies involving IT implementations, identified senior management support as the only clear factor influencing project success.

## 2.2. Project Stakeholders

### 2.2.1. The Project Team

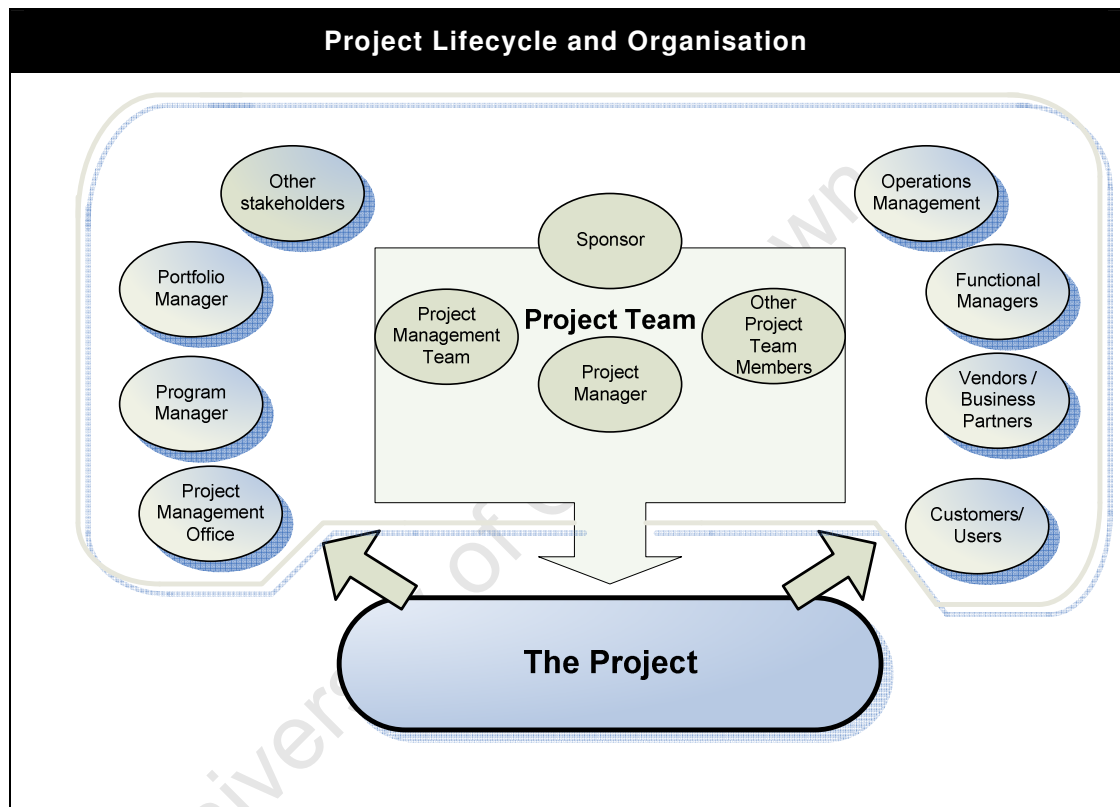
The Project Management Institute (2008, p. 17) defines the stakeholders of the project as the individuals and organisations “such as the customers, sponsors, performing organisation and the public, who are actively involved in the project or those whose interest may be positively or negatively affected by the execution, completion, or cancellation of the project”.

In order to determine the requirements and expectations of all parties involved, the project management team needs to identify both internal and external stakeholders (Huang & Wang, 2006; Project Management Institute, 2008; Sutterfield, Friday-Stroud & Shivers-Blackwell, 2006). Furthermore, the project manager needs to

manage the influence of the various project stakeholders in relation to the project requirements to ensure the project is successfully completed (Achterkamp & Vos, 2007; Project Management Institute, 2008).

The connection between the project, the project team, and other stakeholders are illustrated in Figure 1:

**Figure 1:** The relationship between stakeholders and the project



Project Management Institute (2008)

The term project stakeholder will be used throughout this paper to refer to an individual or group of individuals that is directly or indirectly impacted by a project, as defined by Sutterfield *et al.* (2006).

Within each specific project, various stakeholders have or perceive that they have various stakes in the project (Project Management Institute, 2008; Sutterfield *et al.*, 2006). Based on their perceived stakes in the project, stakeholders behave in ways in which they feel will help them achieve their project goals and objectives, which may or may not be aligned with the project manager's project mission, vision, and/or objectives (Project Management Institute, 2008; Sutterfield *et al.*, 2006). It is

therefore essential that the project manager understand the objectives of each stakeholder in order to effectively manage their needs (Huang & Wang, 2006; Sutterfield *et al.*, 2006).

In essence, in order to achieve a successful project outcome, the project manager must be skilled at managing the interests of multiple stakeholders throughout the entire project lifecycle (Project Management Institute, 2008; Sutterfield *et al.*, 2006).

The *PMBOK® Guide* (Project Management Institute, 2008) recognises three key stakeholders of a project team:

**Project Sponsor.** The individual or group that provides the financial resources for the project. In addition, the individual or group acting as the sponsor is responsible for championing the cause of the project.

**Project Manager.** Is the individual assigned by the performing organisation to realize the project objectives. Furthermore, the project sponsor is the main individual responsible for interfacing the all stakeholders, in particular, the project sponsor, project team, and other key stakeholders.

**Other project team members.** Team members who carry out the work but who are not necessarily involved with the management aspects of the project.

In order to successfully complete a project, these individuals need to work effectively by demonstrating an ability to work well together, accepting the strengths and weaknesses within the team, and leveraging the diverse skills available to ensure the project success (Project Management Institute, 2008).

### 2.2.2. Stakeholder Management

Various studies indicate that the success rate for IT projects are generally quite low (Gillard, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2001; Zwikael, 2008). According to Legris and Collette (2006), research and field experience suggest that for better results, project management process must incorporate a wide range of factors which closely involve project stakeholders. Bourne & Walker (2007) assert that the

project's success, or failure, is strongly influenced by both the expectations and perceptions of its stakeholders, and the capability and willingness of project managers to manage these factors. This is in alignment with Thamhain (2004) who states that project success depends to a large degree on effective interactions among the stakeholders responsible for the new project development.

A significant emphasis is placed on the management of technological aspects and/or project management technical issues, with little importance being placed on management of stakeholders and actively managing the human aspects throughout the project lifecycle (Baccarani, 1999). Stakeholder Management is a vital issue in project management as a project can be seen as "a temporary coalition of stakeholders having to create something together" (Jepsen & Eskerod, 2008, p. 335).

As previously mentioned, project stakeholders are the individuals and organisations who are actively involved in the project, or whose interests may be "positively or negatively affected as a result of project execution or successful project completion" (Baccarani, 1999, p. 26).

Contributions from a strong combination of supportive and influential stakeholders are necessary to successfully complete a project and it is the responsibility of the project manager to ensure such contributions through management of the stakeholders (Achterkamp & Vos, 2007; Jepsen & Eskerod, 2008).

The PMBOK® Guide (Project Management Institute, 2008) links stakeholders with project success – "The project management team must identify the stakeholders, determine what their needs and expectations are, and then manage and influence those expectations to ensure a successful project." It is widely agreed that a project has many stakeholders, whose interest may be related or in conflict (Huang & Wang, 2006; Project Management Institute, 2008). To this extent, the project manager will seek the stakeholders' input to the project to achieve project success (Huang & Wang, 2006; Turner & Müller, 2004; Zwikaël, 2008).

While a project manager is accountable for managing day-to-day tasks and delivering project outputs, as a project is a complex endeavour, project managers can expect support from other stakeholders in the organisation (Bourne, 2008; Bourne & Walker, 2007; Zwikaël, 2008). In particular, the active involvement of

senior managers of the organisation can assist project managers to successfully complete the project (Young & Jordan, 2007; Zwikael, 2008).

One of the vital project stakeholders is the project sponsor, who has a major stake in the project's success, and who deals directly, and most frequently with the project manager (Christenson & Walker, 2004; Project Management Institute, 2008).

## 2.3. Project Sponsor

### 2.3.1. Role of the Project Sponsor

Although most organisational projects have many interested parties or stakeholders, the "executive with the fiscal authority, political clout, and personal commitment to see a project through is the project sponsor" (Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2006, p. 16).

Project sponsors, often referred to as the executive sponsor, are primarily considered responsible for project resources (Helm & Remington, 2005; Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2006). This is evident in the definition of a sponsor as provided in the *PMBOK® Guide*: "the person or group that provides the financial resources, in cash or in kind, for the project" (Project Management Institute, 2008, p. 19).

Sponsors may arise from the project area itself, such as a CIO to spearhead an IT project or a research and development director and is typically a senior management representative (Bucero, 2005; Bryde, 2008; Jedd, 2005). The role of the project sponsor involves more than simply supporting a software development, but rather overseeing reorganisation or layoffs to ultimately realise project benefits (Bryde, 2008; Jedd, 2005).

The sponsor is responsible for the ultimate success of the project, and has the authority to influence decision making (Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2011). An effective sponsor means active, hands-on management of the project, including acting as the project's champion in showing a passion for the project, getting others actively involved and removing barriers to success (Bucero, 2005; Jedd, 2005; Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2011; Project Management institute, 2008). Furthermore, project sponsors

need to ensure everyone involved in the project has a clear understanding of their responsibilities and empower them to get the job done (Jedd, 2005; Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2006).

Early research by Burbridge and Friedman (1988) and Jarvenpaa and Ives (1991) identified the importance of executive support in fully exploiting the benefits of IT. In their research on the role of executive involvement in IT management, Burbridge and Friedman (1988) revealed that as IT applications began to be viewed as central to the organisations strategy, the need for the sponsorship role became essential to support this investment in IT. As stated by Crawford *et al.* (2008, p. 48), research by Burbridge and Friedman (1988), is of significance as it is an early example from the research literature recognising the role of the sponsor as “extending beyond traditional financial responsibilities”.

In their research looking at the role of the project sponsor, Helm and Remington (2005) carried out a combined analysis of the roles and responsibilities of the project sponsor in relation to the project organisational structure and the behaviour and practices of key identified stakeholders. After analysing the literature, questions were formed into guided in-depth interviews with selected project individuals. Project managers and sponsors were asked to define the role of the project sponsor and the way that that role contributed to project success. The most frequently cited project sponsor characteristics included:

- Appropriate seniority and power in the organisation
- Political knowledge and savvy
- Ability/willingness to make project/organisation connections
- Courage/willingness to go to battle with others on behalf of the project
- Ability to motivate the team and provide ad hoc support to the team
- Willingness to partner with the project team and project manager
- Excellent communication skills
- Personally compatible with other key players
- Ability/willingness to challenge the project and provide objectivity

(Helm & Remington, 2005)



This is in close alignment with findings obtained by Kloppenborg, *et al.* (2006) who undertook a study to identify project sponsor behaviours necessary for successful project implementation. This was based on earlier work which identified risk factors and with the help of experienced project managers, linked project risk factors and success outcome measures with sponsorship behaviours.

Their results revealed several significant and positive correlations between certain sponsor behaviours and project success outcomes. Behaviours that were seen to have a positive impact on project outcomes were:

- Establishing commitment and communications
- Aligning and defining the project
- Defining performance/success
- Selecting and mentoring the project manager
- Prioritizing
- Selecting and establishing project teams

Other research by Cooke-Davies and Dinsmore (as cited in Jedd, 2005) found executive sponsors assume several distinct yet interrelated roles in guiding projects:

- Owner of the business case – A sound business case underpins a sound project charter. It is the sponsor's job to ensure that, on behalf of the organisation, that the business case is accurately articulated and also, on behalf of the project, to ensure that the project plan is developed.
- Harvester of benefits – the benefits cannot be realised until after the project is completed, the product or service handed over to the users, and the used to benefit the organisation. The sponsor, being part of the permanent organisation, is better placed to influence the behaviour of the users than the project team, which is unlikely to be around when the benefits come through.
- Governor of the project – The task of governing a project is likely to prove challenging for sponsors who have risen to the top of their organisations though successfully managing business as usual.
- A "friend in high places" to the program manager or project manager – By virtue of their credibility and status, sponsors are ideally situated to assist with the management of executive stakeholders.

- Champion of the project – Ensures that all project stakeholders within the organisation understand are committed to the project and understands the benefits that will flow from the project.

A good sponsor adds value to the project and plays different roles during the project life cycle, including: defining the business benefits/requirements, establishing a project strategy with priorities, agreeing the project definition, defining the project success criteria, on-going monitoring of the projects business environment and of benefit realisation, taking delivery of a project at completion and, in extreme cases, taking the decision to cancel a project (Bucero, 2005; Bryde, 2008; Helm & Remington, 2007).

The project sponsor must connect the project manager with upper management and work closely to ensure the project is a success (Bucero, 2005; Jedd, 2005). In particular, project sponsors must be involved from initiation to closeout (Bucero, 2005). Considering their essential start-up tasks, they must:

- Develop an initial draft about the project mission, objectives, risks and constraints
- Identify the right project manager
- Sell the project to upper managers, team members and the rest of project stakeholders
- Communicate the importance of project mission.

(Bucero, 2005)

Complex projects require sponsors who are more leaders than managers, individuals who establish directions for the future, communicate through vision, create aligned, high-performance teams, and who are highly focused on planning and short-term goals (Bucero, 2005; Huang & Wang, 2006).

According to Cooke-Davies (2006), the sponsor of any project or program provides a vital link between three of vital elements of an organisation: top management who set the strategic direction, business and line managers who deliver the day-to-day profit, services and resources, and the manager and team seeking to deliver the project successfully. To achieve this, they have a wide variety of roles to perform,

and their competence is vital to the success of the project that they are sponsoring (Cooke-Davies, 2006; Sahm & Avital, 2004).

### 2.3.2. The Project Sponsor Project Manager Relationship

Sponsors have a significant stake in the successful delivery of a project, and therefore, at times, may take an active role on the project team (Project Management Institute, 2008). According to Turner & Müller (2004), responsibility for project success lies typically with project sponsors, who ensure the projects alignment with the organisations strategy, and accepts accountability to the top management for the investment in the project. Sponsors provide the financial resources, monitor the project plans, milestones as well as project completion (Bucero, 2008; Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2006; Sahm & Avital, 2004; Tesch *et al.*, 2006, Wright, 1997).

However, the responsibility for day-to-day operations and management of the project is delegated from the project sponsor to the project manager, who manages the project towards the agreed upon outcomes and objectives (Brewer, 2005; Huang & Wang, 2006; Turner & Müller, 2004).

In order to successfully see a project through to completion, an effective relationship must be developed between the project sponsor and project manager and this relationship, according to Bryde (2008) and Bucero (2005), is seen as a partnership.

The Guidelines for Project Sponsor (2004) define the role of the sponsor as the individual responsible for creating an environment in which the project can operate successfully and project benefits can be realised, while the project manager is responsible for that successful operation and delivering the project deliverables. This partnership is “facilitated by an agreement between the project manager and sponsor on the project’s nature and expected results” (Guidelines for Project Sponsor, 2004, p.3).

During the project life cycle, the sponsor must be informed of progress and status and regularly meet with the project manager to discuss issues, lessons learned,

and any and all issues encountered (Cooke-Davies, 2005; Helm & Remington, 2005; Turner & Müller, 2004).

The sponsor is heavily involved in the initial stages of project initiation, since that phase requires making strategic decisions and developing the project's overall "concept of operations" (Guidelines for Project Sponsor, 2004, p. 2). Initiating a project requires an investment of the organisations resources. Consequently, there are specific responsibilities a sponsor takes on to ensure that this investment facilitates the successful delivery of the project (Guidelines for Project Sponsor, 2004; Turner & Müller, 2004). These include assisting in maintaining project credibility, momentum and committed support throughout the project lifecycle (Kale, 2000; as cited by Esteves & Pastor, 2002).

It is the project manager's responsibility to ensure the sponsor understands an adequate level of detail about both the managerial and developmental aspects of the project in order to be effective in providing guidance, resources, and advocacy (Guidelines for Project Sponsor, 2004; Turner & Müller, 2004).

Throughout the project life cycle, the sponsor will be called upon by the project manager to assist in resolving any issues that require his/her influence, knowledge, and negotiating skills. In the latter stages of the project lifecycle, the sponsor will be involved primarily in key milestone reviews and decisions, as determined by the project manager, and in the presentation of the project's results and benefits to those who will be affected (Guidelines for Project Sponsor, 2004; Tesch *et al.*, 2006; Turner & Müller, 2004).

At the conclusion of the project the sponsor needs to provide information about the extent to which the overall business objective was achieved with the project, allowing the project manager to draw lessons learned for future projects and provide adequate information to the project team and other stakeholders (Huang & Wang, 2006; Turner & Müller, 2004).

## 2.4. Project Sponsor and Project Success

Early understanding of the role of the project sponsor as the person or group responsible for approving the finance and providing resources has gradually been expanded to include many other key tasks which appear to be directly related to project success (Bucero, 2005; Crawford *et al.*, 2008, Helm & Remington, 2007).

Furthermore, project sponsors play a vital role in project governance and project success and as such, project sponsors who guide a project to successful completion are critical to project success (Crawford *et al.*, 2008; Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2006).

According to Kloppenborg *et al.* (2006), recent anecdotal evidence, as stated in articles such as "Surviving the Sponsor Exit" (Meiymuka, 2004a), and "Firing Your Project Sponsor" (Meiymuka, 2004b), stress the role of the project sponsor with respect to project success, often quoting advice from senior project managers on how to deal with ineffective project sponsors.

Cooke-Davies (2005) and Jedd (2005), contend that research points to the direct relationship between successful projects and executive sponsorship. Furthermore, Cooke-Davies (2005) notes that project sponsors contribute to both project effectiveness and efficiency by driving project efficiencies at the project level, using the traditional measures of time, cost, scope and quality as well as variables such as health, safety and environmental impact. Despite this link, many organisations do not spend enough time training executive sponsors and explaining their expected role and responsibilities (Bucero, 2005).

Organisations often confuse the roles played by the project sponsor (Bucero, 2005; Christenson & Walker, 2004). At times, the sponsor is not actively involved in the project. Other times, the project sponsor is too involved and acts like a "super project manager," micromanaging tasks and deliverables and generating conflicts and problems (Bucero, 2008, p. 1).

There has been considerable attention given to factors contributing to project success and failure. Included in these has been the examination of project manager competence, while little has been written about the concepts and constructs of the role of project leaders in developing and communicating a project

vision and the impact of this on project success (Bucero, 2005; Christenson & Walker, 2004).

While there are many who contribute to a given project, project managers are often considered the direct leadership component essential to project success. However, according to Kloppenborg *et al.*(2007), research has placed an emphasis on investigating the role of executive sponsors in the project management process and project success.

Although most project management literature recognises the project sponsor as a key stakeholder in most projects, very little research has examined the role of the executive sponsor in achieving project success (Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2006). The role of the project sponsor is emerging as complex and difficult to define, and one that should be carefully assigned, considering the characteristics of the project and its importance to the organisation (Helm & Remington, 2005). The uncertainty of their roles among project sponsors raises a need for organisations to more frequently assess the role clarity of individuals holding these key positions (Crawford & Brett, 2001; Helm & Remington, 2005; Sahm & Avital, 2004).

## 2.5. Summary

Various factors have combined to draw attention to the importance of sponsorship of projects. One such factor being that after many years of attempting to improve the success rates of projects by focusing on the project-based management and the project management competence of practitioners, compelling evidence reveals that the success or failure of projects is not completely within the charges of the project manager and project team. Recent emphasis has been placed on the importance of top management support, more specifically, on the individual that typically provides the direction and funding, the project sponsor.

Project sponsors play a vital role in project governance and project success. Project sponsors contribute to both project effectiveness and efficiency by driving project efficiencies at the project level, using the traditional measures of time, cost, scope and quality as well as variables such as health, safety and environmental impact.

Furthermore, most of the factors contributing to success are related to management, organisational and human issues – not technical issues. Moreover, all the studies reviewed above highlight an association between sponsorship activity of top management support and project success. However, although most project management literature recognises the project sponsor as a key stakeholder in most projects, very little research has examined the role of the executive sponsor in achieving project success.

Though traditional views of project success hinge around the 'iron triangle' of time, cost and scope, and while these are always important considerations, other factors, namely the role of the project sponsor can have an impact on the success of a project. While research has identified the effectiveness of the sponsor as a predictor of project success, many organisations do not spend adequate time training sponsors and explaining their expected role and responsibilities in the project and towards project management.

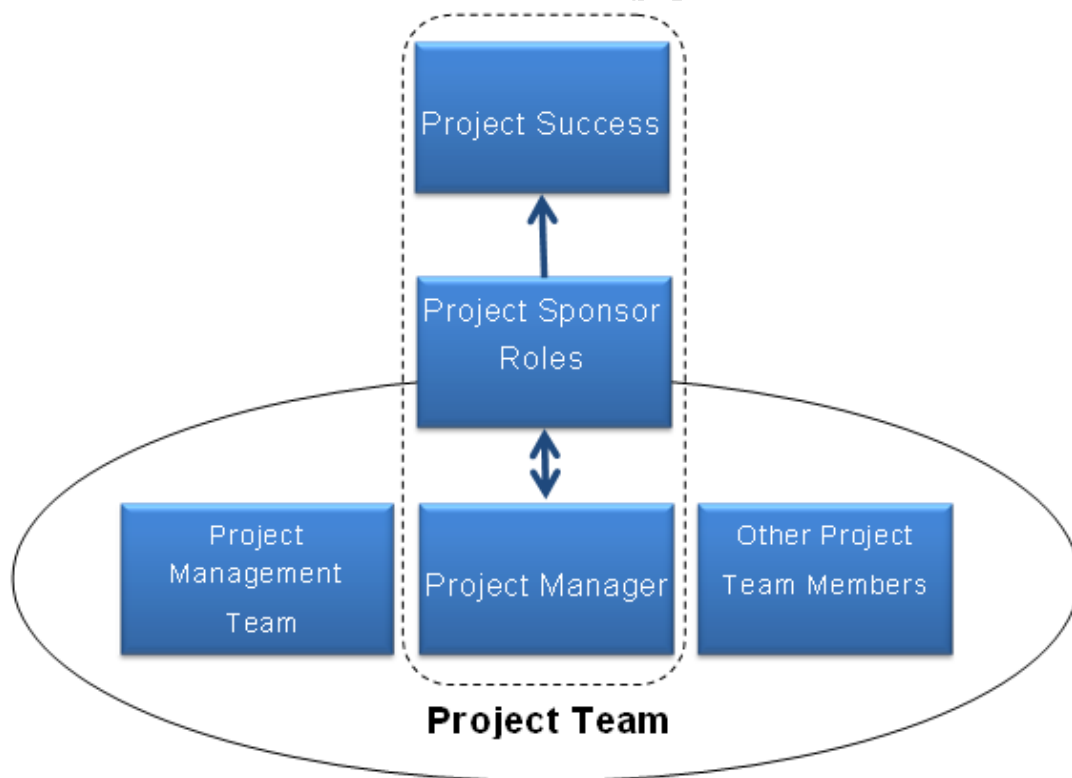
## 2.6. Proposed Research Model

Based on the literature review, a research model has been developed which will be used to understand the impact of the sponsor role on project success.

Figure 2 is a diagrammatic representation of the proposed research model, adapted from Project Management Institute (2008), illustrating the interaction between the project manager and the projects sponsor, and the sponsors impact on project success.

This research will focus on determining the roles of the project sponsor and its impact on project success, from both the perspectives of the project sponsor and the project manager.

Figure 2: Proposed research model





### **3. Problem statement, research question and research objective**

#### **3.1. Problem Statement**

The proposed research seeks to understand and identify the role of the project sponsor and its impact on information technology projects success. This will be achieved by examining and identifying the sponsor roles that impact IT project success.

#### **3.2. Research Question**

This research set out to understand the IT project sponsor role and their impact on project performance. The literature survey sought to identify the current understanding of the role of the project sponsor and project success. While the literature points to a link between the role of the sponsor and project success, what was not clear was the specific roles performed by the sponsor which positively impacts the performance and successfully delivery of a project. Thus, in light of the literature overview conducted, the refined research question is:

- What sponsor roles facilitate project success?

#### **3.3. Research Objective**

Based on the research question, the primary objective of this study are as follows:

- To identify the roles of the project sponsor that contribute towards project success

## 4. Research Approach

This chapter provides a description of the approach around which the research was carried out. Furthermore, it explains the way in which the research was undertaken while also serving to justify the research approach and philosophy which were used. It is structured as follows: Section 4.1 describes the research purpose. This is followed by Section 4.2, which outlines the research philosophy.

### 4.1. Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was exploratory as its intention was to yield new insights into the role of the project sponsor and how it impacts IT project performance. This was achieved by identifying the specific roles associated with the sponsor that impacts IT project performance. This research was also exploratory since there was limited information or knowledge about the research topic. As mentioned previously, limited research has been conducted in the area of the role of the project sponsor and project success. The exploratory nature of this research has led to insight and comprehension of the research topic rather than the collection of detailed, accurate and replicable data.

### 4.2. Research Philosophy

According to Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2004), there are three broad epistemological categories: positivist, interpretive, and critical. Just as people's values and beliefs differ, these three research paradigms also differ in the ways to understand what research is. All studies are thus based on some underlying assumptions about what constitutes valid research and appropriate research methods (Myers & Avison, 2002; Myers, 1997).

Critical studies aim to "critique the status quo, through the exposure of what are believed to be deep-seated, structural contradictions within social systems, and thereby to transform these alienating and restrictive social conditions" (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p. 6). The positivist paradigm assumes that reality is objectively given and can be described by measurable properties, autonomous of the observer and his or her tools (Myers & Avison, 2002). Furthermore, positivist studies "are premised on the existence of a priori fixed relationships within phenomena which are typically investigated with structured instrumentation" (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p. 5). In other words, the assumption underlying this methodological

approach is that research should be based on the positivist model of measuring, or to an extent controlling, variables and testing pre-specified hypotheses (Kaplan & Duchon, 1988; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). Interpretivist research, in contrast, is characterised by a need to understand the fundamental nature of the world at the level of subjective experience through recognising the way others construe, conceptualize, and understand events, concepts, and categories (Hirschheim & Klein, 1989; Kaplan & Duchon, 1988). As these events and categories are assumed to influence individuals' behaviour, the point of reference needs to be from participating in the action, not from a point of outside observance as in positivist research.

Information Systems (IS) had its origins in a variety of reference disciplines with distinctive theoretical research perspectives on the key issues to study and the methods with which to study them (Kaplan & Duchon, 1988). Historically, IS research has inherited the natural sciences paradigm resulting in criticisms that research in this area tends to be dominated by scientific methods (Lee, Liebenau & DeGross, 1997). According to Myers (1997), as the focus of IS research shifts from technological to managerial and organisational issues, qualitative research methods become increasingly useful. This is due to these method's abilities to assist the researcher consider new insights that can arise from shifting the lens from positivist to other paradigms (Flick, 2006; Hirschheim and Klein, 1989, Seale *et al.*, 2004). Additionally, the current positivist perspective has insufficient variety for the nature of the area of study investigated by IS researchers (Myers & Avison, 2002).

In the search for underlying relationships, the positivist researcher focuses on the validity and control of the research measures, and thus adopts a predefined and restricted stance towards the phenomenon being investigated (Lee *et al.*, 1997; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). Such a position is "not conducive to the discovery and understanding of non-deterministic and reciprocal relationships" (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p. 12).

As such, for the purpose of this research, the underlying philosophy used was interpretivist with a qualitative approach, since what was being attempted in the research was to understand meanings which underlie the social world. Essentially, this research sought to identify and understand the different sponsor roles and how that impacts on IT project performance. Interpretive research methods in information systems (IS) are "aimed at producing an understanding of the context

of the information system, and the process whereby the information system influences and is influenced by the context” (Walsham, 1993, p. 4-5, as quoted by Myers & Avison, 2002, p. 6). The interpretive approach was used as these studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective meanings as they interrelate with the world around them, through the understanding of the “deeper structure of a phenomenon”, allowing for the collection of richer data (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p.5). As is the case in all interpretive studies, this research will understand the phenomena under study through the meanings that people assign to them and with the idea that the social world is produced and reinforced by individuals through their action and interaction (Myers & Avison, 2002; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). These meanings and intentional descriptions are important as they reveal individuals states of mind which can be correlated with external roles and behaviors (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991).

Additionally, a qualitative approach has been selected as they are said to yield a better understanding of the real world setting as opposed to those in a more controlled setting (Kaplan & Duchon, 1988). This approach places an emphasis on meanings that are not measured or examined in terms of quantity and stresses intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored and the situational constraints which shape the process (Lee et al., 1997). Furthermore, a qualitative approach was applied as participants were sampled according to needs with continuous interplay between data collection and analysis (Myers & Avison, 2002). This aided the understanding of the social and cultural contexts of the participants’ environment. This knowledge allowed the researcher to interpret data gathered on a personal level. In addition, a qualitative research approach was more appropriate to the study of those attitudes and behaviours best understood in their natural setting as opposed to the somewhat artificial settings of experiments and surveys (Babbie & Mouton, 2004; Flick, 2006; Myers & Avison, 2002).

## 5. Research Methodology

This chapter provides the overview of the research methodology used for this study. The rest of this chapter is organised as follows: Section 5.1 describes the research sample. Section 5.2 provides a description of the research instrument used in this study, while Section 5.3 explains the instrument validation and pilot study employed. This is followed by Section 5.4 explaining the interview design. The data collection strategy is covered in Section 5.5, Section 5.6 continues with the data analysis technique. Section 5.7 covers the data integrity and ethical considerations, while Section 5.8 discusses the limitations of the research. Section 5.9 concludes this chapter with a summary of the research methodology used in this study.

### 5.1. Research Sample

An essential consideration when designing a study is the proper selection of participants that will be representative of the population. This selection depends on the phenomenon or situation being studied (Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Jiao, 2006; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). As such, the participants need to reflect the relevant characteristics of the population (Bonebright, Miner, Goldsmith & Caudell, 2005; Seale *et al.*, 2004).

As the purpose of this research was not to generalize to a population but to obtain insights into a phenomenon, individuals, or events (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007), non-random quota sampling was used. The sample was therefore purposefully selected to maximise the understanding of the phenomenon and because these individuals (i.e. project managers and sponsors) and settings were selected as they are considered to be “information rich” i.e. they are able to provide the greatest insight into the research question (Devers & Frankel, 2000; p. 264).

Furthermore, the researcher decided on the specific characteristics and quotas of sample members to be selected. As noted by Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007), a limitation of this sampling approach was that that only those individuals who were accessible at that time of selection had a chance of being selected.

The target population for this research was limited to project managers and project sponsors working in an IT project environment. Project managers were included in the sample as they often deal directly with the project sponsor. These individuals

were selected on the basis of their involvement on IT projects, where an IT project is defined as a project involving the provision of a service to implement systems and solutions, which include various hardware and software products (Howard, 2001; Zwikael, 2008). Moreover, these projects have been described as successful with success defined according to the definition provided by the PMBOK® Guide (Project Management Institute, 2008) as including the 'iron triangle' aspects as well as the key stakeholders' satisfaction of the project as defined in the literature review. Additional project selection criteria included projects with a budget of R100 000 or more with duration of between 9 to 36 months.

The interview participants are employed by a wide range of organisations varying from Retail to Health, IT and the Media sector. Access to these individuals was gained through a list of project managers and sponsors obtained by the researcher through business contacts and with the aid of the researcher's supervisor.

Sampling entails more than the number of participants included in the research; it is a process that incorporates the number of participants, the number of contacts with each participant, and the length of each contact (Collins *et al.*, 2006; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Quota sampling was also used to ensure that data would be gathered from at least 6 participants for each of the project manager and project sponsor roles as an initial sample, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Initial sampling plan**

Participant Role	Number of Participants
Project Manager	6
Project Sponsor	6

However, due to time and work constraints, both on the part of the participants as well as the researcher, this initial target was not achieved. The actual sample used in this study consisted of 9 participants as highlighted in the table below:

Table 3: Actual Sampling Plan

Participant	Role	Experience (Yrs)	Industry
P1	Project Manager	2	Health
P2	Project Manager	9	Health
P3	Project Sponsor	12	Education
P4	Project Manager	4	Retail
P5	Project Manager	7	IT
P6	Project Sponsor	15	Media
P7	Project Manager	3	Education
P8	Project Manager	7	Health
P9	Project Sponsor	4	Health

Project managers and project sponsors tend to be busy, active and practical individuals for whom reflection can be both difficult and time wasting (Helm & Remington, 2005). Another limiting factor included the rigid schedules and scarcity of available time of senior IT personnel, particularly the project sponsors. As noted by Crawford *et al.* (2008) research concerning the role of the project sponsor tends to rely greatly on the views of the project manager as sponsors' are "notoriously difficult to access, either for research or for any form of training and development for the role" (Crawford *et al.*, 2008, p. 5). For this reason, the research sample consisted largely of project managers. In total, 6 project managers and 3 project sponsors were interviewed.

The capacity of the interviewer to connect and empathise with the interviewees in order to facilitate their expression of things that they had never clearly articulated was essential (Helm & Remington, 2005). To further encourage candid discussion, the interviewees' anonymity was guaranteed (Hall, Holt & Purchase, 2003). This was achieved by reassuring the interviewee at the start about the research purpose and about confidentiality of all participants interviewed (Walsham, 2006).

## 5.2. Research Instrument

The research instrument used for this research was adapted from those used by Helm and Remington (2005) and Kloppenborg *et al.*, (2006) as these are previously validated research instruments focusing on the role of the sponsor. A copy of the interview schedule is provided in Appendix C. The schedule was divided into the following two sections:

**Section A: Demographic profile of project.** This section aimed at obtaining demographic data about the project, including cost, and schedule.

**Section B: Role of the Project Sponsor.** This section aimed at gathering information around the role of the project sponsor. Additionally, this section further differed depending on whether the interviewee was a project sponsor or project manager. In this respect, for project managers, questions were phrased to elicit information on their views of the project sponsor. Equally, project sponsors were interviewed based on their roles on projects.

In addition, to further assist in the gathering of information, interview participants were provided with a list of typical sponsor behaviours, validated by Kloppenborg *et al.*, (2006), which they were asked to review prior to the interview with the intention of assisting the participant in preparing for the interview. As noted by Walsham (2006), interviews should be supplemented by other forms of field data in an interpretive study. Furthermore, descriptions of the research schedule, interview agenda, and glossary of terms were provided to each participant to further aid in preparing the latter for the interview.

## 5.3. Instrument validation and pilot study

The research instrument was evaluated by one research peer. This review was aimed at assessing the face and content validity (Brown & Venkatesh, 2005, Seale *et al.*, 2004). Subsequent to this, a pilot study was conducted with an IT project manager to evaluate the reliability and validity of the questions. This enabled the researcher to identify and consider any ethical issues which might arise during the



final study. Following these reviews, amendments were made, as deemed necessary, to reword and/or remove some items which are possibly ambiguous. As a result, the following question around 'project success' was removed from the research instrument:

- i. Did others in the organisations have different measures of success?

The reason for this was to allow the researcher to probe for and elicit feedback which was specific to the project and its members. This thorough process gave the researcher the confidence to proceed with the data collection procedure.

#### **5.4. Interview Design**

The format of the interviews was face-to-face and semi-structured. The researcher utilised the interview schedule as the prepared list of questions which was used as a guideline for the interviews. As previously mentioned, the questions have been designed based on the adapted research instruments and research question. Interviewees were given the opportunity to talk freely on their perceptions and experiences on the behaviours of the project sponsor, while the interviewer occasionally intervened to ensure the interviewees' answers remain pertinent to the area of research. While each interview lasted approximately between 45 to 60 minutes, one hour sessions were allocated to each interview to allow sufficient time for detailed discussions.

#### **5.5. Data Collection Strategy**

As the sample was limited to project managers and project sponsors working in an IT project environment, a semi-structured interview strategy was used to collect data. The interviews were face-to-face. A set of open-ended questions, as per the research instrument, was used to allow for unrestricted responses from the participants. The interview approach was chosen because a relatively small sample was used. Interviews were chosen as the data collection method as greater "reliability can be placed on the data gathered in an interview over that gathered by a list of self-completion questions in a survey" (Allan, 2003, p. 8). The interviews were semi-structured with respect to a standard set of questions being asked to each and every participant as well as tailoring the interview based on the responses of the participants. This assisted in probing the participants while retaining a balance between excessive passivity and over-steering participants in their responses. By avoiding over-steering, the data obtained much of the richness of interpretation, while not being overly passive allowed the researcher to display

an interest in the participants' responses (Walsham, 2006). Additionally, consent letters were sent out to participants inviting them to participate in this study.

The interview commenced with an introductory session with the interviewer first welcoming and thanking the interviewee for their time. This was an important step aimed at making the interviewee more comfortable. This was done to ensure a more relaxed environment in which the participants would feel that they can discuss the topic freely and naturally (Brown, Gordon, Janik & Meyer, 2005; Oppenheim, 2001; Seale *et al.*, 2004; Walsham, 2002). The interviewer then elaborated on the research objectives and the purpose of the research. To keep the interview to the point, guiding questions, as per the interview schedule were put to the participants.

The interviews were recorded using a digital tape recorder to record the participants' responses so as to ensure accuracy of data. The advantage of this was that it allowed for a truer record of what was said compared with the taking of notes during the interview and also freed the researcher to concentrate on engaging with the interviewee (Walsham, 2002). Furthermore, participants were asked for their permission prior to the recording of the interviews. The interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Excel and although time consuming, it provided the researcher with the opportunity to get re-immersed in the data.

## 5.6. Data Analysis Technique (and Coding Technique)

Analysis of the data collected in this study was guided by the Thematic Analysis technique as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic Analysis is defined as a method used to identify, analyse and report on patterns or *themes* within data collected in research (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is a systematic process for categorising the content of text and identifying relationships among the themes that minimally categorises and describes the data in rich detail (Berg, 1995, as cited by Lane, Koka & Pathak, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Furthermore, Thematic Analysis has been described as the search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon under investigation (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) and involves the identification of these themes through "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p. 258, as cited by Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It is a type of pattern recognition within

the data, where “emerging themes become the categories for analysis” (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 4).

One of the advantages of this approach is its flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic Analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which has the potential to provide a rich and detailed, yet composite, account of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, as Thematic Analysis does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of other approaches, such as Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis, it presents a more accessible form of analysis, particularly for those new to qualitative research, as the researcher was (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### ***What constitutes a theme?***

A *theme* identifies something important within the data in relation to the research question, and represents “some level of patterned response or meaning” within the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). As noted by Braun and Clarke (2006), a vital question to address when analysing data for themes is: What counts as a theme? And/or what ‘size’ does a theme need to be? The general idea relates to frequency, both in terms of space within each coded interview and of frequency across the entire range of data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Preferably, there would be a number of occurrences of the theme across the data, however, more occurrences do not necessarily imply that the theme itself is more crucial (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As this is qualitative analysis, there is no hard-and fast answer to the question of what proportion of your data [set] needs to display evidence of the theme for it to be considered a theme. It is not the case that if it was present in 50% of one’s data items, it would be a theme, but if it was present only in 47%, then it would not be a theme. Nor is it the case that a theme is only something that many data items give considerable attention to, rather than a sentence or two. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82)

Owen (1984) proposed three criteria for identifying a theme: (a) recurrence of the same thread of meaning in different words; (b) repetition of words, phrases, or sentences with the data; and (c) forcefulness of vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pauses.

As a theme may be given significant space in some data items, and little or none across others, researcher judgement is essential to determine what a theme is (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Part of the flexibility of Thematic Analysis is that it allows one to determine themes (and frequency) in various ways (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). A key consideration however, is that one remains consistent in how one achieves this within the particular analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher was concerned with themes that related to the research question. As a result, a theme from a project managers perspective, in reference to the sponsor roles, was comprised of an account of the specific roles exhibited by the particular sponsor on his or her project, including what he or she referred to as an actively involved sponsor.

### ***Inductive vs. Theoretical Thematic Analysis***

The choice between an inductive and theoretical approach maps onto how and why you are coding the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With the Inductive approach, themes are strongly linked to the data, bearing some similarity to the Grounded theory approach, with little or no correlation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In contrast, with the Theoretical approach, themes strongly map to the research question under investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A *theoretical* Thematic Analysis approach has been followed in this research, as the analysis was driven by the researcher's "analytical interest" in the area of research under investigation which allowed the researcher to code for a specific research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Additionally, this approach allowed the researcher to engage with the literature prior to analysis, something which is not recommended in the inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### ***Semantic vs. Latent themes***

A further consideration when conducting Thematic Analysis revolves around the level at which themes are identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through the semantic approach, themes are identified within the surface or "explicit meanings" of the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Conversely, the latent approach goes beyond the semantic approach and begins to examine the "underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations" within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Due to time constraints and the researchers limited experience in this research method, the semantic approach to identifying themes was followed, where the data has been organised to show patterns in "semantic content" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

While Thematic Analysis is widely used, there is no clear agreement about what this approach is and how to go about applying it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The Thematic approach used in this research is the one described by Braun and Clarke (2006), which comprise of 6 phases, as outlined in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

#### ***Phase 1: familiarizing yourself with your data***

The process of transcription and reading and re-reading the data allowed the researcher the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the data. This initial step was a vital one as it allowed the researcher to immerse himself in the data to the extent that he became familiar with the depth and breadth of its content. This process usually involves 'repeated reading' of the data, and reading the data in an active way searching for meanings, patterns and so on.

#### ***Phase 2: generating initial codes***

This phase involved the assembly of preliminary codes from the data. *Codes* identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the researcher, and refer to 'the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 68, as cited by Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 18). While coding forms

part of the analysis process, organising data into meaningful groups, coded data differs from themes which are often broader. This phase allowed the researcher to compare and contrast similar data, which initiated the process of identifying themes. Each interview participant was assigned a different colour as well as coded with a number between P1 (Participant number one) and P9 (Participant number nine). This allowed participants to remain anonymous.

### ***Phase 3: searching for themes***

Phase 3 started once all the data was initially coded and collated, and the researcher assembled a list of the different codes that were identified across the data set. This phase, which re-focused the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involved sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes.

### ***Phase 4: reviewing themes***

This phase began once the researcher devised a set of candidate themes, and it involved the refinement of those themes. This involved reviewing themes at the level of the coded extracts, reading all the collated extracts for each theme, and reviewing whether they formed a coherent pattern. Also, the validity of the individual themes in relation to all interview responses coded was considered.

### ***Phase 5: defining and naming themes***

Phase 5 began once a satisfactory thematic map of the data had been generated. At this stage, themes were defined and refined, through identifying the core that each theme embodied, and determining what aspect of the data each theme captured. The outcome of this phase was clearly defined themes.

### ***Phase 6: producing the report***

Phase 6 began once a set of clearly identified themes was sourced, and involved the final analysis and write-up of the report, and included sufficient evidence of the themes within the data.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

To further assist with the analysis of the data and identification of themes, Owen's (1984) guide for thematic analysis, as adapted by Zorn and Ruccio (1998), was used to interpret the interview notes and transcriptions and to support the coding of the data.

**Table 5:** Guide for Thematic Analysis (Zorn & Ruccio, 1998)

1. Two copies of the text to be analyzed was printed
  2. The research questions were written on a separate sheet, each in a different colour
  3. Additionally, Owen's criteria for thematic analysis was printed:
 

**Recurrence** : at least two parts of the discourse reflect the same thread of meaning, even though different words are used

**repetition**: key words, phrases, or sentences are repeated in at least two parts of the discourse

**forcefulness**: in oral discourse, significant changes in volume (whisper or speaking loudly), inflection, positioning (especially, putting an idea first in a list or explanation), or the use of dramatic pauses or introductory/follow-up phrases that indicate the importance of a segment of discourse ("Here's the main thing . . . ." "What I really think is . . . ." ". . .and that's what it all boils down to." ". . . so that's what I really think."); in written discourse, forcefulness is communicated by underlining, circling, or highlighting, using all CAPITAL letters, or the kinds of introductory or follow-up phrases mentioned above. Note that not every instance of a theme needs to be forcefully communicated; for it to be a theme, however, it should sometimes be forcefully communicated.
  4. The researcher read through the text to be analysed, and underlined potential answers to each of the research questions. As there was more than one research question, answers to each question were underlined in the same colour ink that was used to write the particular research questions. Additionally, where same utterance answered more than one research question, it was underlined with more than one colour.
  5. The **first** time a theme is noted, a highlighter was used to identify the **place** in the text in which it was observed. Afterwards, same colour highlighter was used each time the theme was observed.
  6. On the notepad, under the appropriate research question, brief description of the theme was written and highlighted in the matching colour.
  7. Each theme identified was highlighted in a different colour.
  8. The text was re-read to identify themes that the researcher may not have noticed on the first reading, to revise theme descriptions, and to re-categorize particular segments of the text.
  9. Key themes were identified by their frequency and by the degree to which they are closely associated in meaning and in discourse with other themes.
- \*Adapted from Owen, W. F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 274-287. For an example of thematic analysis applied to organisational communication, see Zorn, T. E., & Ruccio, S. (1998). Motivational communication in college sales teams. *Journal of Business Communication*, 35, 468-499.

(Zorn & Ruccio, 1998)

This aided the researcher in identifying themes within individual interviewees' responses, as a result preserving individual perspectives, in addition to finding themes common to all or most interviewees (Zorn & Ruccio, 1998).

A further key consideration to note, is that qualitative analysis guidelines are not “rules, and, following the basic precepts”, need to be applied flexibly to fit the research questions and data (Patton, 1990, as cited by Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.86).

## 5.7. Data Integrity and Ethical Considerations

The interviews were completed voluntarily by all the participants in the study sample. A cover letter (Appendix A) stating the purpose of the research was provided in advance to the participants. In addition, the participants were given a brief background to the proposed research and were asked whether they wished to participate or not. Once they provided their consent to take part in the study, they were required to fill out and sign the consent form (Appendix B).

The researcher took the necessary steps to ensure that reliable participants were interviewed. The data collected from the interviews was analysed with great rigour and attention to detail. Traceability was ensured throughout the data analysis process by deriving themes from the original quotations of the participants during the interviews.

Microsoft Excel 2003 was used to assist in data analysis to ensure systematic analysis of representative instances of data. The researcher also recorded the interview data objectively and comprehensibly, through the use of the digital voice recorder. All these steps were taken to ensure the validity of the methodology used in the study.

Every effort was undertaken to ensure that the identity of all the participants, their companies, and the information and opinions expressed by them, remained completely anonymous. The interview protocol was provided to the University of Cape Town Ethics Committee for approval and interviews commenced once approvals were obtained. The researcher did not attempt to gather personal sensitive details of the participants. The interview instrument was also approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Cape Town. Any information gathered was kept strictly confidential and access to data collected was restricted to only the researcher.



## 5.8. Limitations of the Research

As noted by Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006), limitations occur in all studies. The main limitations and difficulties of this research were as follows:

- **Unavailability of certain stakeholders:** Limitations of this research included the scarcity of available time of senior IT personnel, most notably project sponsors, due to rigid time schedules, which led to a relatively small sample (9 interviewees). This was as a result of the actuality that project managers and project sponsors tend to be busy, active and practical individuals for whom reflection can be both difficult and time wasting. As a result, this furthermore impacted the number of sponsors the researcher intended to interview.
- **Inexperience:** The relative inexperience of the researcher in conducting interpretive, qualitative research was one of the limitations of this study.
- **Researcher's subjectivity:** The issues of subjectivity are open and acknowledged as a limitation in this study but the researcher maintained every effort to manage them as much as possible.

## 5.9. Summary of Research Methodology

This chapter has outlined the research process that was adhered to in this study. A qualitative interpretive philosophy was applied. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used as a guide to analyse the results of this study.

A summary of the research methodology followed in this study is presented **Table 6**

**Table 6:** Research Methodology Summary

<b>Research Context</b>	<b>The Role of the Project Sponsor and its Impact on I.T. Project Performance</b>
<b>Research Philosophy</b>	Interpretive
<b>Research Approach</b>	Qualitative
<b>Data Collection Strategy</b>	Semi-structured Interviews
<b>Data Analysis Technique</b>	Theoretical Thematic Analysis

## 6. Data Analysis and Results

The aim of this chapter is to discuss analysis and results of this research study. Section 6.1 adds background and meaning to this research through demographics of participants in this study. Section 6.2 consists of the results of the themes or roles that were identified.

### 6.1. Demographics

To provide greater context and meaning to the discussion, background information on each of the participants is provided. A prerequisite for interview participants to contribute to this study was that they be involved in an IT project in a project manager or project sponsor capacity. Additional project criteria included projects with a budget of R100 000 or more with duration of between 9 to 36 Months. The demographics are included in this study to aid in providing insight and value to this research. These demographics are detailed in the Tables 7 and 8 below:

**Table 7: Participant Information**

Participant	Role	Experience in Role (Yrs.)	Industry
P1	Project Manager	2	Health
P2	Project Manager	9	Health
P3	Project Sponsor	12	Education
P4	Project Manager	4	Retail
P5	Project Manager	7	IT
P6	Project Sponsor	15	Media
P7	Project Manager	3	Education
P8	Project Manager	7	Health
P9	Project Sponsor	4	Health

Table 8: Project Information

Participant	Project Duration (Months)	Project Cost Range (R in thousands)
P1	11	400 – 500
P2	15	500 – 1000
P3	30	> 1000
P4	12	> 1000
P5	15	500 > 1000
P6	18	> 1000
P7	9	400 - 500
P8	12	400 - 500
P9	24	> 1000

## 6.2. Analysis and Research Findings

The data analysis process commenced once all interviews were concluded. A thematic analysis of the interview data was conducted, which involved identifying repeated patterns of meaning within the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This analysis was performed as per the approach described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This was initiated by the researcher transcribing all the interview data to allow for the process of coding. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), each interview transcribed was read and re-read. This process allowed the researcher to familiarise himself with the data, and gain preliminary ideas of concepts within the data set. Interesting features of the data were then coded in a methodical manner and data relevant to each code was marked with a highlighter pen so that the data was organised into meaningful sets.

The coding framework was guided by Owen's (1984) criteria for thematic analysis, as well as focusing on theoretical interests guiding the research question (Attride-Stirling, 2001). It is important to note that the method chosen to code the data set does not affect the construction of a thematic map or network (Attride-Stirling, 2001). As such, codes were applied to the transcribed data set to generate coded segments: identifying meaningful passages that are of significance to the research questions.

In total, 28 Codes were derived on the basis of (1) specific interest in the role of the projects sponsor, and (2) of these sponsor roles, those that contribute to project success. These two foci were combined, and through reviewing the transcripts, the most significant concepts in the discussions were recognized and grouped into a fixed set of codes that were distinct enough to avoid duplication, and comprehensive enough to add value.

The 28 codes were then grouped into 12 candidate themes, and a review of each codes text passage was performed. During this process, the researcher kept track of i) the themes that were emerging ii) the reference of specific text segments that contained each theme, and iii) the number of quotations within the text segments that contained each theme.

Themes were identified on the basis of their importance within the data in relation to the research question, and guided by Owen's (1984) criteria of analysis.

The candidate themes were then reviewed and refined, to ensure that each theme accurately reflected the coded segments and the transcribed data, so that a thematic "map" of the analysis could be generated.

The candidate themes were then refined into 7 themes, that were i) detailed enough to be distinct, and ii) broad enough to encompass a set of ideas contained in numerous text passages (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Additionally, themes that presented themselves more frequently were given preference (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The purpose for this criterion for selection was not to associate “greater overall explanatory value to themes on a quantitative basis”; it merely allowed the researcher to focus and concentrate on common themes, which was the specific interest of this research (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 395). As noted by Attride-Sterling (2001), thematic analysis are equally applicable in analyses that gave attention to commonalities, differences or contradictions, and it is up to the researcher to formulate themes in an approach that is germane to the researchers theoretical interest.

Below are the results of the dominant themes identified in the analysis. The researcher refers to the interviewees in the research as ‘participants’ throughout the text. All quotes are “*written in italics enclosed by double quotation marks (Participant)*” to indicate that this is not the researchers wording but the words of the participants.

#### 6.2.1. Active involvement

The most common theme identified was a sponsor who was actively involved in the project, and was found in all 9 participants’ accounts. This theme encompassed various sub-themes that identify “*active involvement (P7)*” from a sponsor as a key role. For example, all project managers reported that a sponsor who showed an ardent interest in their project, through attending important meetings and reviewing work in progress, was a key role required from a sponsor. Additionally, all sponsors cited their on-going involvement in project activities as well as active monitoring of project risks and attending project meetings as a key function of their role. This is in alignment with Young & Jordan (2007) and Zwikael (2008), who found that active involvement of senior managers of the organisation can assist project managers to successfully complete the project.

Both sponsors and project managers mentioned consistent reviewing of project work and regular meetings with the project team, as key functions of an actively involved project sponsor

*“..in terms of dealing with issues that were escalated and getting involved, he played a very active role in the project. What I’m trying to say is, that he was um always available, you know.. and I don’t mean that whenever I walked into his office he was there, but when his attendance*

*was required in a meeting, or he had to review work, he made sure he provided input (P2)”*

As alluded to in the extract above, actively involved sponsors are not overly involved in project activities, rather being available when needed. It was also noted, that while sponsors are individuals who by their seniority, are not always available, to facilitate effective project delivery, sponsors had to “*make the time (P2)*” to review project work and progress.

Principally, the project sponsor needs to strike equilibrium between active involvement and over involvement. All project managers cited the need for the sponsor to regularly communicate with the project manager and be clearly informed about the project risks, progress and issues relating to the project. Additionally, participants’ emphasised the importance of this role, as it provided the team with “*a sense of comfort (P1)*” knowing that they had the “*support and participation (P5)*” of the sponsor.

*“..by showing interest in the project, it definitely made my team more, how can I say, committed to the project, because it demonstrated how important the project was, and I think it also allowed them to focus on the task at hand, knowing they had the support they needed (P8)”*

Participants alluded to project sponsorship being a “*a dynamic and active process (P5)*” and one of the roles affecting project success. “*Without active participation by project sponsors, project performance would be very poor (P4)*”. All project sponsors interviewed noted that by being visibly involved in the project, they were able to see “*..better results, in terms of meeting deadlines (P3)*” from a delivery perspective, as well as “*knowing the status of the project or any potential issues (P6)*”. Reasons provided include, “*..it showed the team that the importance of the project (P9)*” and “*..by being available, I was able to provide guidance and direction (P6)*”. An actively involved sponsor is a crucial role that has a vital impact on the potential success of a project. All participants highlighted the need for the sponsor to proactively outline the projects vision and objectives, as well as providing guidance and direction.

### 6.2.2. Cognizant of organisational politics and applying political pressure

Being conscious of organisational politics as well as having the ability to exert political pressure on behalf of the project was a theme which was greatly emphasised by participants. As noted by one participant, “*There isn’t a company around that doesn’t have to deal with politics (P8)*”. Having an understanding and awareness of the political landscape and the ability to navigate this environment, is an important role required of a sponsor.

*“..He applied political pressure, as I mentioned in [client name] where another project conflicted with delivery times, he was not averse to using the political pressure (P5)”*

*“He managed organisational politics; at one time the rollout was a bit of a mission and networks department wasn’t giving us a certificate, and he really came through (P4)”*

Participants noted that while the dimensions of politics within organisations may vary, most organisations have some degree of politics that have a direct or indirect impact on the project. Steering through this politics takes a strong resolve and insight of the organisational hierarchy and mechanisms to conduct one self.

The majority of participants noted that a keen awareness and understanding of key stakeholders and “*role players (P3)*” within the organisation was important, as the sponsor could engage with these individuals to apply political pressure on behalf of the project, where needed. All participants noted that politics is inherently present in organisations, and as such, has the ability to affect the outcome of a project. As a result, it was noted that the sponsor “*..needs to play in this space (P9)*”, through “*building alliances (P5)*” with key stakeholders.

*“..the sponsor must be aware of this, and I think in my project I was lucky enough to have someone [sponsor] who knew how to operate at that level. He was in the company for a while and I think that also helped, because he knew who the right people were. Also, I think it helped to shield the team from all that stuff; so that they could get on with the job (P1)”*

All participants mentioned that every organisation has politics that the sponsor needs to be aware of, in order to ensure successful delivery. Additionally, participants noted that this was essential, as the sponsor would need to brief the project manager on any

"..*political issues (P4)*" within the organisation that could impact the delivery of the project.

### 6.2.3. Demonstrate project value to senior management

At any given time, organisations undertake a multitude of projects, all adding various degrees of value to the organisation (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007). The ability of the project sponsor to highlight the value and importance of a project to senior management was a recurrent theme.

Participants mentioned that while obtaining approval for projects is seen as significant in an organisation, the sponsor needs to "*..constantly and consistently demonstrate the benefits of project to exco [executive committee] (P2)*". While executives and senior management are often "sold" on projects from individuals within the organisation, the process of demonstrating value should continue throughout the project lifecycle. The majority of participants cited this as an important means of building relationships with key stakeholders, in order to obtain support. Additionally, just as the project manager would regularly feedback to the project sponsor on project status and progress, all except two participants highlighted the need of the sponsor to provide regular updates to executive and senior management, in an effort to further demonstrate project benefits and value.

*"On my particular project, my sponsor made an effort to sell the project to the senior level [management]. Not only did that help with obtaining support from the guys on top, but it helped further down the line when there was another project that came through, and it required resources; because my sponsor engaged with the guys at that level and made them aware of the importance of our project, they knew that they couldn't pull any resources from my project.. (P5)"*

The majority of participants noted the sponsor should "sell" the value of the project, through demonstrating how project objectives are aligned to organisational goals and strategy, thus adding impetus for the need of the project. Furthermore, what emerged was that attempting to successfully deliver a project without senior or executive support proved "*frustrating (P1)*" for many project managers.



#### 6.2.4. Empower and partner with the project manager

The fostering of the sponsor and project manager relationship and interaction on a project was a theme that emerged as a key role that is often overlooked and which invariably has an impact on the performance of a project. This emerged despite previous research identifying the need for an effective project manager project sponsor relationship to ensure project success (Bryde, 2008; Bucero, 2005).

Participants noted that the project sponsor needs to “*give the project manager the authority (P8)*” to drive the project and “*allow me [the project manager] to make decisions on behalf of him [the sponsor] and the project (P1)*” as well as instil accountability and responsibility, and ensure that the project manager drives this within the project team. Furthermore, the majority of participants noted that through a strong partnership, the project manager and sponsor working together, greatly benefits the project team, through effective management of resolution of issues and obstacles. Participants cited the need for the project sponsor to “*empower (P7)*” the project manager, through providing the necessary support and autonomy to successfully run the project and to allow the project manager to make decisions.

Participants also mentioned the project sponsor and project manager sharing the same “*goals and vision (P8)*” for the project assists in effective and efficiently delivery of the project. Additionally, this was highlighted as beneficial as it allowed the project manager and project sponsor to ensure that the project team focused on delivery and working towards a common and clear articulated goal. Eight of the participants also noted that through this clearly articulated shared vision, project teams appeared to be more committed to delivery.

*“I think what benefited me in this project was that we [project manager and project sponsor] had a meeting before the project kicked-off. It gave me a chance to provide [project manager name] with my vision and objectives for the project, and also to get an understanding from both sides around; how can I put it, our expectations from each other and the type of support that he [project manager] would need from me (P6)”*

All participants citing the importance of the project sponsor and project manager partnership highlighted the need for a clear definition of roles and responsibilities between the two roles, as well as a clear understanding of expectations from both

parties. A few participants noted the value of the sponsor playing a “coaching role (P5)” to the project manager, and ensuring the project manager is setup for success.

*“I was lucky in that he [the sponsor] gave me the support that I needed. I learnt a lot from him, particularly around who the key stakeholders were, and also who to engage with if I needed something to help me run the project. He [the sponsor] was very helpful in that respect (P7)”*

What emerged was that the project manager and project sponsor dynamic is a key determinant of projects performance. Both individuals need to be cognizant of the relationship and be aware of the value of working together to ensure successful project delivery and benefit. Participants further alluded to an approach of building trust and support, between the project manager and project sponsor to further enhance the partnership and ensure successful delivery.

### 6.2.5. Ensure availability of resources

This role was highlighted by all participants as being essential to ensuring successful project outcomes. Sourcing of project resources was seen as a key driver of project performance, and function of the project sponsor.

*“Along with providing the budget, the project sponsor needs to provide the resources for the project, such as people and technology (P6)”*

Participants noted that the project sponsor as the “chief campaigner (P2)” of the project and needs to be active in partnering with the project manager to identify and secure the necessary resources. Additionally, the majority of participants noted that project managers need to be clear about what resources were required, to allow the sponsor to secure the best resources and ensure successful project delivery.

*“You need to be realistic about these things. The resources in my company is very limited; as it is in most. Also, you don’t always get the resources that you want. But on my project, because my sponsor believed in what we were trying to do, he went and fought to get the*

*best available guys on the team, and that for me really set the project up for success (P2)”*

Furthermore, it was noted by participants that the sponsor needs to ensure that “*appropriate resources (P1)*” sourced and assigned to the project. While the project identifies the project resources, the project sponsor needs to ensure that the required “*subject matter experts (P7)*” are availed to the project. This, mentioned by the majority of participants, both project managers and sponsors, was important to ensure the successful project outcomes.

#### 6.2.6. Timely resolution of escalated issues

This was a recurring theme, cited by all participants. The following extract demonstrates the value of the sponsor dealing with items escalated to him or her:

*“I remember in the project, there was some issue with [client name]; they didn’t come to the party in terms of meeting their deadlines so it had a knock on effect in terms of us delivering on the rollout of the other schemes, and it was escalated to the sponsor and he effectively dealt with it. This was important because if he didn’t deal with it, it would have had serious repercussions for the project. It also allowed the team to get on with the job without having to worry about this issue (P1)”*

All participants cited the need of the project sponsor to be in control of the major issues which were escalated, and which he or she needs to address. Reasons provided for this included “*..it allowed the team to focus on their work and get the job done (P4)*”, as well as “*..by dealing with the issues that the project manager escalated, it allowed him [the project manager] and the team to concentrate on the work with minimal distractions (P8)*”. Additionally, what was highlighted by all project sponsors, was that the project manager needs to ensure that only issues that are suitable for the project sponsor to address are being escalated. Only those issues which cannot be resolved at the project managers’ level should be escalated. Furthermore, the project manager needs to ensure that that the sponsor has

been provided with sufficient information and realistic timelines in which to resolve them.

The majority of participants cited the need of the sponsor to not only resolve escalated issues, but also *“dealing with them in a timely manner so that it doesn’t negatively affect the project (P4)”*. This was highlighted as imperative as *“..while most sponsors may commit to resolving project issues at the start, when it comes to the crux of it, they don’t have the time, and this has a negative impact on the project, which was the case for me [project manager] (P7)”*

Participants further highlighted the need for an effective *“escalation process”* to ensure that only the appropriate project issues are raised with the project sponsor to deal with. *“This helped the team understand how issues would be resolved and what their role was in it. Also, this made sure that only the big issues that we needed the sponsor to resolve were escalate (P4)”*

#### 6.2.7. Appropriate level of authority and influence within organisation

The majority of participants interviewed cited *“necessary level of authority (P2)”* and the *“ability to influence (P7)”* as an essential requisite for an effective sponsor. It was perceived as a key requirement to have the ability to influence key stakeholders in the organisation on behalf of the project. Additionally, this allowed the project sponsor to make the necessary project decisions required of him or her, as well as supporting and defending those made by the project manager. Participants noted that the sponsor required a *“..high level of credibility within the organisation (P4)”* as well as *“..sufficient level of authority and influence (P2)”*. It is essential to note that this was stressed as fundamental by both sponsors and project managers as this allowed the sponsor to *“support what the project needed to achieve (P1)”*.

Participants cited the need of the project sponsor to exert influence through affecting key individuals within the organisation by means of *“demonstrating project value and alignment of strategy to ensure that the projects goals are achieved (P5)”*. This is further enhanced by the sponsor having a “senior” position within the organisation and managing the relationships at a senior and executive level.

*“On the [project name] project that I managed. My sponsor; he didn’t only have the seniority in the company, but what made a big difference was that he had the authority. So he had a mandate from the exco [executive committee] to make sure that this project finished on time, because it was important (P5)”*

*“He [the sponsor] was well respected within the business, so he was able to influence key people in the IT department, and help out the project (P7)”*

The project sponsor is seen as a “*representative (P2)*” of the project who acts as a liaison between the project team and the rest of the organisation, and builds trust and credibility, on behalf of the project, at the senior levels of the organisation. Additionally, a sponsor with the appropriate level of authority may be well positioned within the organisation to further assist with “*defending the priority of the project within the organisation (P8)*”, as well as “*winning support (P8)*” from interested parties thereby ensuring that the project is more likely to succeed.

## 7. Research Discussion

The principal findings of this study suggest that there are specific project sponsor roles that have a positive impact on the performance of a project. Themes derived from the various interviews were conveyed by participants as being valuable and useful to the function of a project sponsor. Both project sponsors and project managers cited attributes of project sponsorship that, in their view, positively contributed toward successful delivery of a project. Project managers interviewed were asked to describe the roles that their project sponsor played on their project and how that role, or roles, contributed toward the success of the project. Similarly, project sponsors were asked to elaborate on the roles that performed on a specific project, and how that aided the successful delivery of a project.

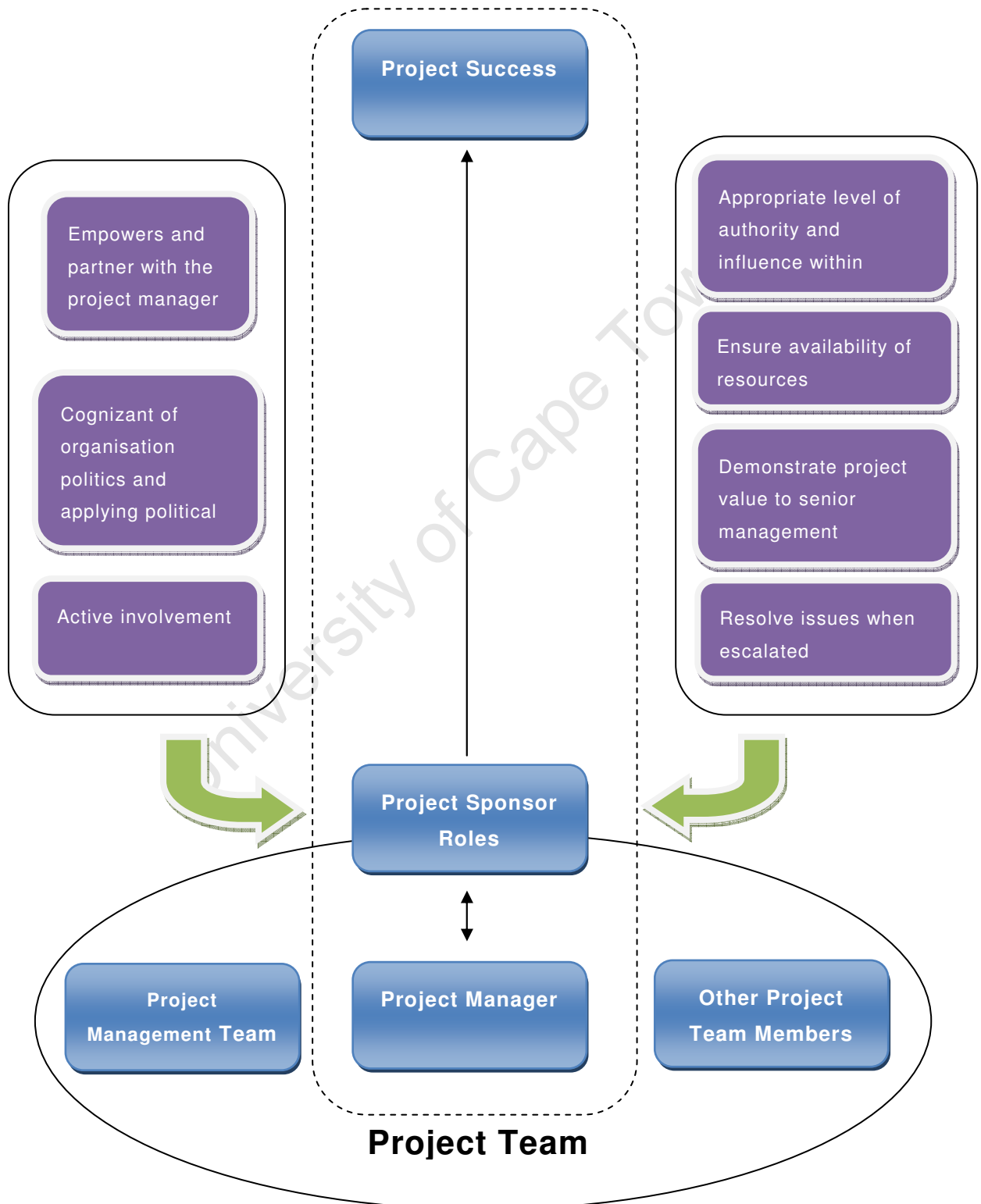
The following section summarises the research findings and interpretations based on the research question of this study.

### 7.1. Project Sponsor Roles Facilitating Success

The research question was focused on identifying the role of the project sponsor, as perceived by the project manager and project sponsor. The diagram below illustrates the interaction between the project manager and the projects sponsor, and the sponsors' impact on project success. The analysis uncovered 7 themes, derived from interviews, which were cited by participants as valuable and advantageous:

**Figure 3:** Graphical representation of research question and sponsor roles that impact project success

**Q: What sponsor roles facilitate project success?**



The purpose of this study was to address the research question, relating to the project sponsor roles that contribute to successful project outcomes. **Table 9** below elaborates on these roles.

**Table 9:** Results of the sponsor roles identified as contributing toward project success

Role	Impact on adoption of the application
Active Involvement	In order to ensure the success of a project, sponsors need to be committed to the project. This involves playing an active and involved role in supporting the project manager and project team. This further entails consistent reviewing of project work and regular attendance in meetings with the project team. This is in alignment with Young & Jordan (2007) and Zwikael (2008), who found that active involvement of senior managers of the organisation can assist project managers to successfully complete the project. The sponsor needs to strike a balance between active and over-involvement, and provide guidance and direction to the team.
Cognizant of organisational politics and applying political pressure	The project sponsor needs to be aware of organisational politics and use this position to act on behalf of the project, where necessary. Having a level of awareness of the political landscape and the ability to operate at this level is an important role required of a sponsor. This is in alignment with Helm and Remington (2005) who highlight the need of the sponsor to be politically aware and knowledgeable. Additionally, as noted by Glen (2009), if the sponsor is politically disconnected from business, a divide will occur, which could disconnect the project from the business.
Demonstrate project value to senior management	The ability of the project sponsor to highlight the importance and benefit of a project to senior and executive management is considered key to making the project a success. Additionally, the project sponsor needs to sell the value of the project through highlighting the alignment of the project goals and objectives with those of the organisation, to obtain the support of senior management.
Empower and partner with project manager	The development of the sponsor and project manager partnership and interaction on a project is a facet of the sponsor role which has an impact on the performance of a project. The project sponsor



	needs to empower the project manager by providing the necessary support, coaching and autonomy to aid the project manager in delivering a project successfully. Both individuals need to be cognizant of the relationship and be aware of the value of working together to ensure successful project delivery. This is supported by Kloppenborg, <i>et al.</i> (2006), who found that the selection and mentoring of the project manager has an impact on project outcomes.
Ensure availability of resources	Provision of project resources was seen as a key driver of project performance, and function of the project sponsor. The project sponsor is seen as the champion of the project and needs to be active in partnering with the project manager to identify and secure the necessary resources. Additionally, the project sponsor needs to ensure that the appropriately skilled resources are sourced for the project.
Timely resolution of escalated issues	The project sponsor needs to be on top of all major issues which are escalated, and which he or she needs to address. This allows the project team to focus on delivery with minimal distraction as well as resolving potential roadblocks to the project. Additionally, issues need to be dealt with before they severely impact the delivery of a project.
Appropriate level of authority and influence within the organisation	This is in alignment with Helm and Remington (2005), who note that the more senior the project sponsor within the organisation, the greater the chance of the project delivering successfully. Additionally, this is further supported by Besner and Hobbs (2006) and Perkins (2005) who noted that involved and committed sponsors must have enough influence to make the changes that are deemed necessary to successfully complete a project.

## 8. Conclusion

The role of the project sponsor has been identified as being fundamental in establishing and delivering projects. While the sponsor role is one which has been recognised as being crucial to the successful delivery of the project, in many organisations, this role and its associated responsibilities are not clearly defined. Although the project manager is tasked with managing the project on a day-to-day basis, the project sponsor is seen as the champion and is ultimately accountable. While it is evident that an effective sponsor means active, hands-on management of the project, including acting as the project's champion in showing a passion for the project and removing barriers to success, the specific roles of the sponsor that facilitate project success have been unclear.

The findings of this study are in line with literature which reflects an awareness of the critical role played by the project sponsor. Furthermore, it is in alignment with research – Jedd (2005) and Perkins (2005) – that identifies the effectiveness of the project sponsor as a predictor of project success. This study has defined a number of themes or roles that have been identified as having an impact on the success of a project:

- Active involvement
- Cognizant of organisational politics and applying political pressure
- Demonstrate project value to senior management
- Empower and partner with project manager
- Ensure availability of resources
- Timely resolution of escalated issues
- Appropriate level of authority and influence within the organisation

Based on the literature, these results are not surprising. The project sponsor is ultimately accountable for the success of the project. The role of the project sponsor is an active one with a significant impact on the potential success of a project. They are the chief campaigners and supporters of the project and need to collaborate and partner with the project manager to identify and source resources that are most likely to lead to successful delivery. In addition, the project sponsor has the responsibility to mentor and coach the project manager. Both individuals need to be cognizant of the relationship and be aware of the value of working together to ensure successful project delivery and benefit. A vital part of this coaching role involves the process of issue escalation. The sponsor is the central point for issue escalation and

management and must assist the project manager and the project team to differentiate between the pertinent issues and follow the escalation process to effectively communicate this. Furthermore, for the project to have a significant chance of success, the project sponsor needs to have the authority and influence within the organisation. This is required to allow the sponsor to demonstrate the project value to senior and executive management with the purpose of obtain buy-in, support and commitment.

Project sponsorship is a critical component in the successful delivery of a project, and the continuous active involvement from the sponsor throughout the project will have a significant impact on the projects performance.

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## 9. Expected contribution

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this study was to examine the role of the project sponsor and how that impacts on project success. Consequently, the expected contribution of the study is that it has identified key project sponsor roles associated with successful project outcomes, and as such, it has implications for organisations regarding the successful implementation and delivery of IT projects.

This research will contribute to the IS body of literature by providing a study of factors affecting the successful delivery of an IT project, specifically addressing the factors contributing to effective project sponsorship. Given the high rate of failure of IT projects, organisations need practical guidance on how to deliver successful IT projects.

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## Appendix A: Cover Letter



### Department of Information Systems

Leslie Commerce Building  
Engineering Mall, Upper Campus  
OR Private Bag, Rondebosch 77001  
Cape Town  
Tel: 650-2261  
Fax No: (021) 650-2280

### The Role of the Project Sponsor and its Impact on IT Projects Performance

Dear Sir/Madam,

My Masters thesis investigates the role of the project sponsor in Information Technology (IT) project success. Efficiently delivering expected benefits from information technology (IT) projects remains a challenge for many organisations. The effectiveness of the sponsor is frequently a predictor of project success and involved and committed sponsors need to be aware of their roles in order to successfully complete a project.

Your participation in this research project will be greatly appreciated. Your input will allow me to identify and understand the role of the project sponsor, by looking at specific sponsor roles, and how they impact the delivery of successful IT projects. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes of your time.

Data collected will be stored electronically and will be kept strictly confidential. Participation will be anonymous as no sensitive personal details such as name and address will be collected. However, if you wish to receive a copy of the final results of the research, you are welcome to give us your email address and a summary of the final results will be sent to you.

The interview instrument that will be administered has been approved by the University of Cape Town Ethics Committee and thus, meets all ethical requirements imposed by the University.

Should you wish to participate in this research, please respond by sending an email to the researcher (email provided below) stating your interest in participating. Thereafter, a date and time that best suits you will be scheduled to conduct the interview.

If you have any further queries, please feel free to contact the researcher using the contact details provided below. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Zaid Khatieb  
Masters Student (Researcher)  
Email: khtzai002@mail.uct.ac.za  
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Prof Derek Smith  
Supervisor  
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## Appendix B: Consent Form



### Department of Information Systems

Leslie Commerce Building  
Engineering Mall. Upper Campus  
OR Private Bag. Rondebosch 77001  
Cape Town  
Tel: 650-2261  
Fax No: (021) 650-2280

#### Participant Consent Form

Date:.....

I agree to take part in the “The Role of the Project Sponsor and its Impact on IT Projects Performance” study conducted by Zaid Khatieb, under the supervision of Professor Derek Smith, for the Department of Information Systems at the University of Cape Town. Any information that I provide in this study shall not be used for any other purpose other than the one stated.

Do you wish to remain anonymous? *(please tick)* Yes No

If you answer No to the above question, please provide the following details:

Name: .....

Gender: Male Female *(please tick)*

Age: .....

Email Address: .....

Signature of participant .....

Signature of researcher

.....

## Appendix C: Research Instrument

### Semi-Structured interview

(Prior to conducting the interview, participants will be asked to think of a project that was successfully delivered)

- Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.
  - Can I first assure you, as notes in the consent form, that you will remain completely anonymous and records of the interview will be coded in such a way that your name will not be able to be identified in the research publications which will be based on this research.
  - If you have any concerns during or after the interview please feel free to contact me or my supervisor. Also you are free to withdraw from the process at any time.
  - Prior to the interview, it would be appreciated if you could have a look at the list of Sponsor roles (identified) (Appendix A) and for your particular project, highlight/consider which roles you viewed as:
    - a. Contributing toward the success of your project
1. We have agreed to talk about project (title of project) which has been nominated by you
  2. First I would like to ask you some questions about the project organisation and project demographics
    - a. Would you please describe how the following project roles were allocated for this project
      - i. Project Manager
      - ii. Project Sponsor
      - iii. Any other relevant roles



3. [The following questions relate to participant demographics]:
  - a. Would you please describe your official title and rank within the organisation
  - b. What is your total years of work experience in this role?
  - c. Would you please indicate the industry type of your organisation (Finance, Retail, Manufacturing, Information Technology, Service, Health Care)
  - d. How is the role of sponsor allocated? Formally or informally?
  
4. **With respect to the ..... project.** Would you mind giving some project metrics?
  - a. Would you please describe the scope of the project?
  - b. What was the budgeted cost?  
(Range: 10K – 50K , 50K – 100K, 100K – 200K, 200K – 300K, 300K – 400K, 400K – 500K, 500K – 1000 000, > 1M)
  - c. What was the final cost?  
(Range: 10K – 50K , 50K – 100K, 100K – 200K, 200K – 300K, 300K – 400K, 400K – 500K, 500K – 1M, > 1M)
  - d. What was the schedule?  
(I.e. How long did it take to complete the project: 9 – 12months, 1 – 1.5yrs, 1.5 – 2yrs, 2 – 3yrs)
  - e. Was the project delivered on schedule? (what was the time overrun if the project was not completed on time)

## 1. Questions for the Project Sponsor

The following questions will be specifically about the **role of the project sponsor** with respect to this project.

1. [The following questions relate to sponsor roles]:
  - b. **What was your role on the project on the project** (e.g. Monitor project risk, Visibly empower PM, Enforce project is on schedule, Resolve conflicts when escalated, Remove obstacles to project, Manage organisational politics)
  - c. Having briefly looked at the list of typical sponsor roles, which would you say you exhibited on this particular project (appendix A)
  - d. What project sponsor roles do u think contributed toward project success and why?

[For each of the above, ask participant why they have those views, and probe for examples on their particular project in which exhibited role contributed to/inhibited/motivated members toward success]
2. This project has been described as a **success**....
  - i. How did you determine that the project was successful?
  - ii. Who were the stakeholder/s that had the most influence/ in driving the project toward success (and why)
3. What are the key attributes needed by you (the Project Sponsor) in communicating project matters with:
  - a. The project manager?
  - b. The project owner?
  - c. Other business owners?
  - d. End users?
  - e. Others?
4. With respect to the Project Manager's role on this project;
  - a. Where do you see the project manager's role beginning and ending? (in terms of the responsibilities of the project manager)
  - b. How do you determine the level of autonomy which you give to the project manager?
  - c. With respect to this project, how much autonomy did you give to the project manager in making project related decisions?

5. From your point of view who were the key stakeholders in terms of:
  - a. Their ability to influence outcomes?
  - b. Their ability to provide support for the project?
  - c. Their ability to motivate team members
    - i. (What sponsor roles do you believe motivates project team members)

University of Cape Town

## 2. Questions for the Project Manager

The following questions will be specifically about the role of the project sponsor with respect to this project.

1. [The following questions relate to sponsor roles]:

- a. Would you please describe the **role of the project sponsor** on your project (e.g. Monitor project risk, Visibly empower PM, Enforce project is on schedule, Resolve conflicts when escalated, Remove obstacles to project, Manage organisational politics)
- b. Having briefly looked at the list of typical sponsor roles, and other than the roles you have just mentioned, which would you say were exhibited by the sponsor on this particular project
- c. What project sponsor roles (those that you have just mentioned) do u think contributed toward project success and why?

[For each of the above, ask participant why they have those views, and probe for examples on their particular project in which exhibited role contributed to/inhibited/motivated members toward success]

2. This project has been described as a **success**....

- a. How did you determine that the project was successful?
- b. Who were the stakeholder/s that had the most influence/ in driving the project toward success

3. Could you describe your approach to communication wrt this project with?

- a. the project sponsor?
- b. the project owner?
- c. other business owners?
- d. end users?
- e. Others

4. What are the key attributes, on this project, needed by the project Sponsor in communicating project matters with:
  - f. The project manager?
  - g. The project owner?
  - h. Other business owners?
  - i. End users?
  - j. Others?
5. With respect to the your (Project Manager's) role on this project:
  - a. Where do you see your (the project manager's role) beginning and ending? (in terms of the responsibilities of the project manager)
  - b. Was the level of autonomy which given to you as the project manager adequate to deal with the issues presented?
  - c. How quickly were decisions able to be ratified? Was there an appropriate escalation procedure? How well did it function?
6. From your point of view who were the key stakeholders in terms of:
  - d. Their ability to influence outcomes?
  - e. Their ability to provide support for the project?
  - f. Their ability to motivate team members
    - i. (What sponsor roles do you believe motivates project team members)

Below is a list of typical sponsor behaviours, validated by Kloppenborg *et al.* (2006).

### Typical Sponsor Roles

For each of the sponsor roles below, think about which roles were exhibited by the sponsor on you particular project, and of these roles, those that Contributed toward project success

Attend important team meetings
Ensure timely corrective action is taken
Encourage steering team to apply necessary political pressure
Authorize execution of project activities
Re-focus team if necessary
Ensure escalation process is used
Monitor project risk
Personally communicate with important stakeholders
Ensure necessary information is accessible
Recommend modification/cancellation of the project if necessary
Evaluate effectiveness of corrective actions
Refine project control system as needed
Ensure ethical standards are enforced
Visibly empower PM
Encourage team and stakeholder input
Build relationships with key stakeholders
Update customers on project progress
Replace PM if necessary
Encourage appropriate risk-taking
Ensure PM seeks necessary resources
Enforce project is on schedule
Resolve conflicts when escalated
Have project manager (PM) report progress regularly
Insist consistent criteria are used for project decisions
Actively listen to team and stakeholders
Celebrate small wins
Remove obstacle to project
Communicate what is/is not negotiable
Scan external environment for threats and/or opportunities
Enforce root-cause analysis is performed
Review work in process
Manage organisational politics

### Typical Sponsor Roles

Ensure that risk avoidance and/or mitigation strategies are used
Enforce use of change management system
Elicit threats and opportunities from PM
Encourage commitment to approved project plan
Adjust resource allocations if necessary
Ensure communication is conducted with all stakeholders
Reward or punish team
Obtain top management consensus
Ask PM "what can I do to help?"
Revalidate business strategy
Remind team and stakeholders why the project is necessary
Enforce appropriate resource utilization
Monitor resistance to project
"Sell" decisions to stakeholders
Work with PM to develop new approach if necessary
Seek additional resources if necessary
Mentor PM
Ensure fair resolution to all issues
Update steering team on project progress
Ensure customer involvement
Re-iterate ethical standards
Communicate issues to appropriate executive(s)
Determine if initial justification for project still exists
Insist on regular performance updates
Solicit various viewpoints
Defend project priority
Provide quick and clear feedback
Support project vision
Determine whether resources are being productively utilized
Use informal communications
Ensure expectations of key stakeholders are met